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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP: PERSPECTIVES OF PRINCIPALS

BY

SANDRA LYNNE BASKETT

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
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Sandra Baskett

PERMANENT ADDRESS:

955 -110 A Street,
Edmonton, Alberta
T6J 6N4

DATE: Oct. 13, 1989

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommended to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled SCHOOL LEADERSHIP: PERSPECTIVES OF PRINCIPALS submitted by SANDRA LYNNE BASKETT in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION.

E. Miklos

Dr. E Miklos (Supervisor)

James Blakey

Dr. J. M. Blakey

Dr. J. Friis

DATE: 10 October 1989

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the principalship from the perspective of the principal. More specifically, the purpose was to develop an insider's or participant's view of the world of school leadership. The study focused primarily on effective principals. A review of the literature confirmed that principals do have a bearing on the success or failure of schools. In order to further the knowledge about effective principals, two questions guided the study. They were:

1. What are the characteristics of an effective school principal?
2. What are the philosophies and practices of selected principals who have been identified by their peers as being highly effective?

The project involved two strategies of inquiry -- quantitative and qualitative -- and two methods of data collection: questionnaire and in-depth interview. Each of the two research questions formed the basis of one aspect of inquiry and data collection. All of the principals and associate superintendents in three urban school jurisdictions were sent a questionnaire requesting a response to two questions. First, they were asked to identify what they considered to be the characteristics of an effective school principal. Second, respondents were asked to nominate principals whom they considered to be highly effective. Subsequently, four of the principals who had been repeatedly nominated by their peers were asked to participate in a series of interviews.

The characteristics suggested by those responding to the questionnaire were grouped according to emerging themes. Forty-six categories of characteristics were associated with seven themes. The themes identified highlighted two aspects of effective leadership: the ability to deal with that which is involved in doing the job

of running a school, and the type of person, personally and professionally, most suited to that role. The seven themes, in order of the emphasis given to them by respondents were: instructional leadership, human relations skills, leadership style, school management, vision, personal characteristics and communication skills.

The interviews with four principals resulted in four stories of leadership. Significant differences and similarities in the four principals were noted, not only in their individual styles and characteristics, but in their orientation to the task of running a school. Based on a review of the literature on effective principals, the process of identifying characteristics of effective principals, and through entering the worlds of four effective principals, some tentative conclusions began to emerge.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The study on which this report is based examined the principalship from the perspective of those who serve schools as principals. Educational leadership, as a field of study and of practice, is an area rich in both theory and application. Literature on leadership, management, and organizational theory related to the school context abounds. Principals, as front-line administrators, are visible and in direct contact with those involved in education. More individuals probably have had contact with a school principal than with any other type of leader. Parents, students, teachers, theorists, senior school administrators and the general public have formed opinions about of the roles and responsibilities of principals.

Problem and Purpose

Knowledge about the principalship seems inadequate when compared to the demands placed on the position. In an effort to contribute to the expanding knowledge base, the principalship was examined from the perspective of participants rather than from that of observer, supervisor, or subordinate. Notwithstanding the wide interest in the principalship and the extensive collection of information that already has been generated, knowledge about the principalship is inadequate in one important domain: principals have not recently been given adequate opportunity to share their views about the ways they practice or attempt to provide leadership. Although the principalship has been much described by observers, supervisors and subordinates, the perspectives of participants have not

been obtained recently. This type of information about the principalship would enrich understanding of the role.

The general intent of the study was to add to the existing body of knowledge concerning effective school principals. In particular, the purpose was to describe an insider's, or participant's, view of the world of school leadership. Two questions guided the study:

1. What are the characteristics of an effective school principal?
2. What are the practices and beliefs of selected principals who have been identified by their peers as being highly effective?

The study was conducted in two phases, each focused on one of the research questions. All of the principals and associate superintendents in three urban school jurisdictions were sent a questionnaire requesting a response to two questions. First, they were asked to identify what they considered to be the traits of an effective school principal. Second, respondents were asked to nominate principals whom they considered to be highly effective. Subsequently, four of the principals who had been nominated several times were asked to participate in a series of interviews.

Significance of the Problem

Much has been written on the topic of effective schools and effective principals; an accumulation of journal articles, books, research reports and dissertations would fill a substantial section of a large library. Almost without exception studies attempting to identify the attributes of successful schools pay particular attention to the principal (Purkey & Smith, 1983; Sackney,1986; Renihan & Renihan, 1984). A logical progression from these findings has been a

number of articles and books based on research, focusing closely on effective principals -- on their administrative styles, leadership traits, job descriptions, and personal characteristics (Boyd, 1983; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1986; & Rutherford, 1985). School principals have not been the only leaders under scrutiny in recent years; the "excellence movement" is strong in other sectors including business, medical, and religious organizations (Kotter, 1982; Peters & Waterman, 1982).

In his synthesis of research on effective school leadership, Sweeney (1982) compared the results of eight prominent studies which focused on the leadership behaviors of effective principals. He reported that "There are six leadership behaviors that have been consistently associated with schools that are well managed and whose students achieve" (p. 349). These behaviors are: emphasizes achievement, sets leadership strategies, provides an orderly atmosphere, frequently evaluates student progress, coordinates instructional programs, and supports teachers.

As well as the studies attempting to articulate behaviors and practices, several researchers and writers have looked closely at individual or small groups of principals to study their specific styles, practices and philosophies (A.D.P. Project Team, 1987; Blumberg & Greenfield, 1980; 1986; Fris, 1988; Johnson, 1985; Wolcott, 1973).

The literature on the topic -- lists of characteristics of principals, case histories, and life stories -- all lead to the same conclusion: Principals do make a difference in school success, and particular actions and personality traits frequently characterize these individuals. Nevertheless, there is a need for more research on

the topic, as is indicated by Sweeney (1982). In the final thoughts in his article he states:

> There is an obvious need to continue, even extensively, school effectiveness research. Having examined a number of papers and journal articles, I submit three recommendations for those focusing their efforts on instructional leadership. The first is to focus further research on the so-called average schools . . . The next is to clearly define and describe instructional leadership since in most cases they are stated in vague terms . . . The last recommendation concerns expectations of students. . . . (p. 352)

The outcomes of this study have potential for making contributions particularly to the second of these recommendations, namely, to describe ways in which principals attempt to provide instructional leadership. This description may have implications for theory, research and practice. Although already extensive, the body of knowledge on effective school leadership may be augmented by additional data on the characteristics of effective principles and descriptions of individual principals. Results of the study may cause future researchers to pick up on an unanswered question or to be challenged by a statement which could lead to further research in the area of effective school leadership. Also, prospective and practicing administrators, as well as supervisors of school administrators, may gain more insights into what it means to lead schools.

Assumptions

A basic assumption made was that more than one research strategy would be required to conduct the study. The two research questions each dictated a different approach to data collection and analysis. Identifying and describing general characteristics of effective school principals, based on the suggestions of many school administrators, was assumed to require a quantitative approach. The

results of the first research question, although presented in a semi-structured, anecdotal manner, took on aspects of the quantitative research paradigm.

Addressing the second research question, that pertaining to the practices and beliefs of a selected group of effective principals, seemed to require a different approach. In seeking to understand the persons involved in leading schools, and gaining an insight into their particular approach to leading schools, a qualitative, naturalistic approach was seemed appropriate. Using a combination of the two approaches was assumed to be desirable in order to gain insights into and to produce a complete picture of school administrators' perspectives on school leadership.

The research was also based on the assumption that those responding to the questionnaire did so honestly and with good intent. The four principals involved in the interview process were assumed to be effective and successful principals. That they were the "best" in their school jurisdictions was not assumed. Principals involved in the interviews were assumed to have spoken with candidness and honesty, at least to the degree that they could given both the circumstances and the understandable desire to protect themselves as well as those associated with them.

Limitations and Delimitations

The study was delimited to the schools and principals in three districts in a metropolitan area. Only principals and associate superintendents were asked to respond to the question concerning characteristics of effective principals and to nominate effective school leaders. A further delimitation was that only practicing principals of elementary and junior high schools were included. This limits the result to the opinions of a restricted group. The four principals who participated in

the interview phase of the study, as well as those suggesting characteristics and nominating principals, do not represent a definable population of principals. The interpretive nature of the study also limits the generalizability of the results.

The findings are limited to the particular time the study was conducted. The four principals involved in the interviews, and those administrators who nominated principals and provided lists of characteristics of effective principals, spoke of their beliefs, opinions, and practices in relation to a particular time and specific setting. Their opinions may change over time and with change of environment. This was the issue which Blumberg and Greenfield (1986) addressed when they revisited eight effective principals several years after initially interviewing them. They found many significant changes, not the least of which was the number of effective principals who had left the principalship.

Organization of the Thesis

In this first chapter were outlined the research problem and the significance for conducting the study together with reference to some related research. The assumptions, delimitations and limitations on which the study was based were also outlined.

Chapter Two contains a review of selected literature on principals. The research methodology, including principal selection, data collection, and analysis procedures, are presented in the third chapter. The characteristics of effective principals as defined by the questionnaire respondents are outlined in Chapter Four. The stories of the four principals are presented individually in Chapters Five, Six, Seven and Eight.

Chapter Nine is a comparative perspective on the four principals interviewed. Chapter Ten contains a summary of the findings of the study, a discussion of the findings related to the literature on principals, and conclusions. Implications for further research, theory and practice, along with some personal reflections are also included in this chapter.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The literature selected for review focuses on leaders and principals in general, and highly effective principals in particular. Some analyses of roles of principals reflect a multi-dimensional perspective while other studies are based on a more holistic view. The latter attempt to look deeper than at the obvious roles or characteristics to determine what distinguishes merely competent from excellent leaders. Research on effective principals has taken several directions including an emphasis on specific characteristics, behaviors, and practices of those who have been acclaimed as effective principals. Other researchers have conducted case studies of small numbers of exemplary school principals. References to selected approaches to investigating the principalship are included in the review.

Nature of Leadership and the Principalship

The principalship and the changing aspects of the responsibilities associated with those who assume that role are topics of considerable concern to those who are associated with schools, as well as to those who study and theorize about school leadership. Campbell, Corbally, and Nystrand (1983) point out that, "In schools, as in any other organization, there is frequently some question about what administrators do" (p. 10). Depending on their perspective and relationship with leaders of organizations, some are in awe of individuals in positions of authority, while others see leaders merely as facilitators or overseers. Frequently, the

principal position is described as one of either leadership, supervision or management, depending on the perspective of the observer.

Mintzberg's (1973) investigation into the work of administrators, school leadership included, described administrative work as being "Fast paced, fragmented, often [focusing] more on action than on thought, and [emphasizing] verbal communication" (cited by Campbell, Corbally, & Nystrand, 1983, p. 11). Mintzberg outlined administrative work from the standpoint of three categories of ten roles often assumed by administrators. They are:

Interpersonal Roles
- Figurehead
- Leader
- Liaison

Information Roles
- Monitor
- Disseminator
- Spokesman

Decision Roles
- Entrepreneur (promotes change)
- Disturbance Handler
- Resource Allocator
- Negotiator

(cited by Campbell. Corbally & Nystrand, 1983, p. 81)

Roles of Principals

An illustration on the front cover of the March/April (1989) edition of the A.T.A. Magazine shows the door of a principal's office clearly labelled "Principal." Below several signs are attached -- Head Teacher, Plant Manager, Evaluator, P.R. Director, Counselor, and Comptroller. The roles that principals do and should perform have been the focus of considerable discussion and research. Some of these roles are discussed in this section.

Miklos (1983) says of the roles associated with principals:

> Judging by the topics which appear on current convention programs and the titles of recent journal articles, there would once again seem to be a considerable amount of uncertainty about the roles of administrators. (p. 1)

Calling these roles "alternate images of what administration is and how administrators might make a contribution" (p. 2), Miklos suggests that although they are familiar terms, the following do serve to form a basis for defining administrative roles:

> **Manager.** The manager is not responsible for doing the primary work in the organization but, instead is responsible for seeing that it is done.
>
> **Facilitator.** In this image, the administrator is portrayed more as a facilitator than as a controller; not so much as a doer, as one who makes it possible for others to do, not so much as one who directs others to do certain things, as one who responds to the needs and demands of others.
>
> **Politician.** In its mildest form this image portrays the administrator as the person who is at the intersection of conflicting expectations, forces and pressures -- as the man-in-the-middle.
>
> **Leader.** Probably the most popular image of educational administrators . . The image of educational administrators as educational leaders places them in the vanguard of efforts to bring about improvements in teaching and learning. (pp. 2,3)

The roles articulated by Miklos have implications for interpreting the research on effective principals because the role most clearly accepted by individual researchers appears to influence the investigation. Those who see principals primarily as managers tend to investigate the management practices of principals; those who understand principals primarily to be politicians or human relations leaders pursue different avenues of investigation.

The role of the principal was the subject of a position paper released by the Alberta School Trustees' Association (1981). The paper stated:

> The principal, more than any other person, can affect what goes on in a school. The principal can set the tone, manipulate the resources, challenge the staff and students, and generate program innovation. In short, it is a position of grass roots leadership (p. 1).

Based on an assumption that certain factors are associated with principal effectiveness and on research into the principal's role, the authors of the document propose that: "The principal can best serve the role of 'the student advocate' by being the instructional leader of the school" (p. 9). To this end, a number of implications for direction in terms of developing school instructional leaders were outlined. Implications included limiting the principal's role, designating associate principals, pre-service and in-service training, and involving principals in more of the district decision making. In effect, the recommendations reflected a tendency to limit the principal's managerial responsibilities and highlight educational or instructional tasks.

A recent study by Brubaker and Simon (1987) investigated principals' own perceptions of their roles. Based on five roles that they believe principals have played historically -- principal teacher, general manger, professional and scientific manager, administrator and instructional leader, and curriculum leader -- the researchers asked practicing principals to define their present leadership role, ideal leadership role, and the role played by the majority of their peers. Most principals viewed both their present and ideal role as being Administrative and Instructional Leader, although they believed most of their peers acted as General Managers.

Sergiovanni (1987) stated that:

> Educational leadership is a broad term with precise definitions left to interpretation by various individuals and groups. . . . those who adopt [a] wider interpretation find the gap between real and ideal to be narrower than is frequently claimed. (p. 16)

He has outlined how the various roles assigned to, and assumed by, principals "contribute both uniquely and interdependently to building and

maintaining successful schools" (p. 16), describing how six roles "when linked together, provide a framework for all the major tasks and functions" (p. 16). These six roles and associated tasks and functions are briefly outlined below:

Task and Function		Role
The effective principal works:		
to define the school's broad philosophy and mission	→	Statesperson Leadership
↓		
which guides achievement of school educational objectives	→	Educational Leadership
↓		
through teachers who are committed to these objectives	→	Supervisory Leadership
↓		
within a supportive school structure and climate	→	Organizational Leadership
↓		
over an extended period of time	→	Administrative Leadership
↓		
in cooperation with teachers, other administrators, and staff	→	Team Leadership

(adapted from Sergiovanni, 1987, p. 17).

What role should the school administrator play? Perhaps obvious, but nevertheless worth making explicit, "An appropriate blending of the images would seem to be particularly important "(Miklos, 1983; p. 4). Sergiovanni's guide for adopting a wider interpretation of the roles associated with the principalship, also encourages a broader based definition than that formed solely on either practical or

theoretical interpretation. It is the balance between the roles employed and the underlying purposes -- educational, managerial, or motivational which they serve -- that help to define the multi-dimensional aspects of school leadership.

Effective Schools and Principals

Many of those seeking insight into the qualities of effective leaders, school principals in particular, recognize three levels of ability loosely defined as incompetent, competent and excellent. One group of writers (Goldhammer, Becker, Withycombe, Doyle, Miller, Morgan, Doloretto & Aldridge, 1971), cited by Blumberg and Greenfield (1980), speak of schools being either "beacons of brilliance" or "pot-holes of pestilence" (p.34). Presumably other schools might be labelled "mores of mediocrity." Principals as "beacons of brilliance" are described by Clamp (1989) as:

> gentle in their treatment of others, wise in judgement and prudent in execution of command. They inspire confidence in self and system, promote justice and are open-minded. They are slow to chide and swift to bless and are respected by those in their service. They are, in a nutshell, wise, and are honored in their wisdom by the possession of a good name and esteem in the community. (p. 7)

However, some, "as the old proverb notes, are not wise; they are 'otherwise'." (Clamp; 1989, p.7). It is the one who is "wise" that Ihle (1987) refers to as "the big principal." "Bigness," admits Ihle, "is a mystical concept . . . when I say 'big' I am talking about power and impact"(p. 94). "Excellence," according to Sergiovanni (1984), "is readily recognized . . . we know excellence when we see it . . . excellence is multi-dimensional, holistic" (p.4).

Sergiovanni elaborates on the difference between those principals who are merely competent and those who are exceptional in how they run schools. Schools

with incompetent principals obviously don't run well; they don't get the job done. Schools with competent principals, on the other hand, clearly measure up to standards acceptable to the communities in which they operate. Excellent schools, however, exceed standards and are not merely satisfactory, they reach high levels of success.

Sergiovanni (1984) has identified what he calls the "leadership forces" contributing to the competence or excellence, success or eminence, of schools today. These forces are described as follows:

> **Technical** - derived from sound management techniques.
>
> **Human** - derived from harnessing available social and interpersonal resources.
>
> **Educational** - derived from expert knowledge about matters of education and schooling.
>
> **Symbolic** - derived from focusing the attention of others on matters of importance to the school.
>
> **Cultural** - derived from building a unique school culture. (p.6)

The technical and human forces have, according to Sergiovanni, "dominated the literature in recent years" (p.6). The role of the principal as an instructional leader, or educational force, has been recognized, researched, and has been the subject of numerous professional articles. Sergiovanni (1984) maintains that little has been done to address the symbolic and cultural forces employed by principals. He argues that it is the technical, human, and educational forces of leadership that, when strong, constitute competence in leadership and schooling. An absence or weak link results in dysfunction and chaos. However,

> Their presence does not guarantee excellence. Excellent organizations, schools among them, are characterized by other leadership qualities; forces described here as symbolic and cultural. (p.7)

To understand the leaders who exhibit the symbolic and cultural forces it is helpful to look at the five figurative roles Sergiovanni applies to principals:

Management Engineer - The role assumed by the technical leader, primarily involved with management strategies which includes time management and organizational theory.

Human Engineer - The role assumed by the human leader, involved in building up interpersonal relationships, staff and student motivation, and providing support and encouragement.

Clinical Practitioner - The role assumed by the educational leader, characterized by excellent knowledge of teaching strategies, curriculum development, and clinical supervision.

Chief - The role assumed by the symbolic leader, concerned with unifying the school and rallying the group.

High Priest - The role assumed by the cultural leader, concerned with building a strong culture and unifying the mission.

Symbolic leaders represent to others the underlying values of what is important in schools. They symbolize what is good about the school, and their name is often synonymous with the school. "Of less concern to the symbolic force is the leader's behavioral style. Instead, what the leader stands for and communicates is emphasized" (Sergiovanni, 1984, p.7). The symbolic leader gives purpose and establishes meaning to everyday activities within the school. A symbolic leader is able to articulate a vision and draw others to a particular viewpoint.

The cultural leader or "high priest" is "engaged in legacy building, and in creating, nurturing, and teaching an organizational saga" (Sergiovanni; 1984, p.8).

This leader binds all participants together to form a unique group or culture -- a "clan or tribe" (p.8) as Sergiovanni suggests. Those invited into this culture are enveloped with a sense of belonging and purpose; their work becomes a mission, not a job.

Braun (1989) presents the position that the "Primary function of the principal is to create meaning within and for the school" (p. 23). He outlined four dimensions and functions associated with creating meaning which he described as, "The process of enabling others to understand and share one's own beliefs, one's dreams, and one's vision. It concerns having a vision and sharing it" (p. 24). He described four "action" dimensions associated with creating meaning and basic functions of each dimension. They are outlined below:

Motivational - personal

morale building
shared decision making
personal growth planning
individual regard
conflict resolution
empowerment

Management - organizational

planning
coordinating
resource allocation
budgeting
problem analysis
scheduling
time management

Communication - articulation

program articulation
system networking
community liaison
media utilization
parental involvement
public relations

Educational - theoretical

learning theory
program development
teaching effectiveness
supervision of instruction
change theory
staff development (p. 25)

The examples of the writing of several current writers on effective school leadership presented in this section seem to support the statement presented by the A.D.P. Project Team (1987) for the University of Alberta, Department of Educational Administration: "Current literature on leadership moves away from the concept of basic technical competence and towards the symbolic, abstract, or artistic aspects of leadership" (p. 4). The focus is not so much on the specifics of what principals do, rather on the underlying motivations or values associated with leadership styles and practices. Both Braun (1989) and Sergiovanni (1984) recognize the powerful impact of the principals practices, values, and vision on the organizational cohesiveness of the school.

Research on Principal Effectiveness

Whether or not principals have a significant impact on the schools they lead no longer appears to be an outstanding issue. Those involved in investigating effective schools have been persuaded that principals do indeed have an influence on the schools for which they are responsible. After years of believing otherwise, Ihle (1987) was forced to change his opinion in the face of current research:

> After many years of believing the opposite, I am now starting to think that principals are more significant in education than teachers. A bad teacher can only ruin a single class. . . . (p. 95)

Similar conclusions have been reached about the importance of leaders in other organizations. Peters and Waterman (1982), in their popular book of several

years ago, *In Search of Excellence*, reported that leadership was a vital force in the excellent companies they studied:

> We must admit that our bias at the beginning was to discount the role of leadership heavily, if for no other reason than that everybody's answer to what's wrong (or right) with whatever organization is its leader. . . . Unfortunately, what we found was that associated with almost every excellent company was a strong leader (or two) who seemed to have a lot to do with making the company excellent in the first place. (p. 26)

Sweeney (1982) surveyed the volumes of research done on effective schools and chose eight of those he felt met strict criteria for valid and extensive research. He found the results about leadership effectiveness to be conclusive:

> The evidence clearly indicates that principals do make a difference, for leadership behavior was positively associated with school outcomes in each of the eight studies. (p. 350)

Clearly then, and with little argument, it has become accepted that leadership factors are associated with successful organizations. Belief in the influence and significance of the school principalship led to an examination of principals. What do principals do and how do they do it? Three strands of research aimed at principals merit particular attention: the roles a principal plays, characteristics and practices of effective leaders, and case studies of specific exemplary school leaders.

Considerable research has been directed at identifying behaviors and practices of principals in schools that are well managed and exhibit high student achievement. Although the words change, much of what has been written describes similar characteristics. Sweeney (1982) identified six behaviors that have been consistently identified in current research on effective schools. They are:

1. emphasizes achievement,
2. sets instructional strategies,
3. provides an orderly atmosphere,

4. frequently evaluates student progress,

5. coordinates instructional programs, and

6. supports teachers.

Sweeney concludes from looking closely at the eight extensive effective schools studies that:

> Taken as a whole these results strongly suggest that principals who emphasize instruction, are assertive, results-orientated, and able to develop and maintain an atmosphere conducive to learning make a difference -- one reflected in elevated school outcomes. (p. 352)

Percell and Cookson (1982) reviewed seventy-five studies and reports also identifying "recurrent behavior that good principals display" (p. 22). The nine traits they consider to be representative of the collective studies on effective principals include:

1. demonstrating a commitment to academic goals,

2. creating a climate of high expectations,

3. functioning as an instructional leader,

4. being a forceful and dynamic leader,

5. consulting effectively with others,

6. creating order and discipline,

7. marshalling resources,

8. using time well, and

9. evaluating results.

They summarize their findings in this way:

> The effective principal is a forceful, dynamic individual who is open to new ideas and has a high energy level. This ideal principal takes the initiative but, at the same time, is willing to listen to others and is skillful in leading through indirection. This style of leadership has been called "authoritative democratic." (p. 27)

The most obvious and significant difference between the findings of Sweeney (1982) and Percell and Cookson (1982) is that the latter found more emphasis on the managerial and human relations aspects of principal responsibility than did Sweeney who described six behaviors primarily associated with instructional leadership.

Mangieri and Arnn (1984) asked 152 principals who led schools with outstanding reputations to rank seventeen described job dimensions. Instructional leadership was the highest ranked area of responsibility. Among the top five dimensions, in addition to instructional leadership were: evaluation of teacher performance, curriculum development, and staffing, all of which are commonly associated with instructional leadership.

A recent doctoral study by Highett (1989), in part identifying characteristics of school effectiveness in Australia, identified Principal as Nexus as one of seven factors of school effectiveness. Within this factor there were a number of items associated with Principal as Nexus including: emphasis on communications skills, modelling learning, actively involved with the curriculum, high expectations for staff, maintaining an open school climate, declaring a personal set of goals for the school, and recognizing the uniqueness of the individual school and community. The factor Principal as Nexus has, according to Highett (1989), "An emphasis on the management and reinforcement of the culture of a school. It is in line with Sergiovanni (1984) where a focus on cultural forces is associated with excellence in schooling" (p. 332).

In addition to research aimed at identifying the roles of principals, and the practices of principals in schools judged to be effective, a body of research is emerging which looks closely at principals who have a reputation for excellence. In

general the method is similar the classic ethnographic study of one principal, Wolcott's (1973), *The Man in the Principal's Office*. One of the most frequently cited reports is based on research done by Blumberg and Greenfield in 1980 and followed up in 1986. Their in-depth study of eight highly effective principals has been acclaimed because it did not provide "yet another list of characteristics of effective principals . . . rather, the work is significant for its description of the principals and their own assessments of how they operate in their schools" (De Bevoise; 1982, p.16). The work of Blumberg and Greenfield (1980) has served as a guide for other researchers who wish to use the case study approach.

The most striking conclusion Blumberg and Greenfield (1980) reported based on their interviews was the idiosyncratic nature of the eight principals. All were outstanding and yet so different. They explained the implication of this:

> Unashamedly, then, and in the face of huge volumes of empirical research that may point in another direction, we were led backwards (though it may be forward) to a consideration of some modification of a more or less "great person" perspective on the process of leading a school. (p. 2)

They were, however, able to identify five "characteristics in common . . . shaping the fabric of their effectiveness" (p.256). Blumberg and Greenfield (1980) report that the principals demonstrated:

> 1. A high level of energy and a willingness to work long hours on a continuous basis.
>
> 2. Extremely well developed expressive abilities.
>
> 3. A proactive approach in response to the requirements of the situations they faced as principals.
>
> 4. All of these principals were very good listeners.
>
> 5. Finally, all of them were very skilled at analyzing and determining the requirements of their school situations, and evaluating alternate courses of action. (p. 257)

This description differs from the lists of characteristics suggested by Sweeney (1982), and Percell and Cookson (1982) in that the emphasis here is on personal attributes or characteristics not easily learned, measured, or observed.

Based on research on effective principals done at the University of Texas at Austin, Rutherford (1985) has outlined "Some clear and easily detectable distinctions between more effective and less effective principals [which] emerged from this data" (p. 32). The distinctions he discovered between more and less effective principals were discussed in terms of the five essential qualities of effective leadership. The five qualities were:

Vision -- clear and informed, based on students and their needs; *Translating the Vision* -- into goals and expectations for students and staff; *A Supportive Environment* -- supportive of goals and expectations; *Monitoring* -- programs and achievement; and *Intervening* -- in a supportive manner only when necessary.

Rutherford (1985) found that although effective principals gave considerable attention to these areas of responsibility the behaviors they exhibited varied considerably, leading him to conclude that "These five qualities - not the daily behaviors -- are the variables that truly determine a leader's effectiveness" (p. 34).

Those who have been identified as being effective school leaders based on a variety of criteria have proven to be rich sources of data on the topic of effective school principals. When large numbers of principals are studied (Sweeney, 1984), or when a few are studied in-depth (Blumberg and Greenfield, 1980), the results contribute to the development of a clearer picture of an effective school leader. The total picture, however, remains somewhat inconclusive. What is becoming clear is that vision seems to be a common thread throughout the research being presented in

that effective principals appear to have a vision for their schools. By their specific behaviors they are able to communicate that vision, establish practices to realize that vision, and to keep energies focused on the realization of their vision.

Conclusion

School principals have a significant bearing on the success or failure, on the effectiveness or ineffectiveness, of schools. How individual principals lead successful schools and operate in an effective manner remains inconclusive. In general, the role a principal plays probably has considerable bearing on success; however, an excellent manager or a "people person" may be skilled in a specific area but ineffective as a principal. Although role expectations may not be vividly clear, and may change from school to school, it is generally accepted that principals have several roles to play. Effectiveness probably depends upon how they combine these roles and where they place their emphasis. Research has shown that principals must be managers of people and resources, human relations experts, and educational leaders. Other roles such as politician, symbolic, and cultural leader are receiving more recognition.

The specific skills, personal characteristics, and practices a principal should exhibit, although the topic of much research, still remains somewhat unclear. Several studies have emphasized that a principal must give priority to instructional leadership. Other analysts have concluded that a principal must articulate a clear vision and mission, while for others principals must build a strong organizational culture in order to be effective.

Success and effectiveness likely have a regional flavor. Community expectation and standards are somewhat different in, for example, a low income

area of Toronto, a rural Alberta school jurisdiction, or an upper income area of Vancouver. This research project was an attempt to add to the work already done on the characteristics of effective school principals as well as to broaden the base of case studies of effective school principals. The sample for the study was deliberately limited to a specific urban area. Although this limits generalizability, local practices and concerns are highlighted.

In many respects this investigation paralleled aspects of some of the research reviewed in this chapter although their limitations were addressed in the design of the study. The work of Blumberg and Greenfield (1980) is perhaps the most similar to this study, however, the American setting and the decade that has passed since the principals were interviewed limits its generalizability and relevance. The more current work of Highett (1989), which in part addressed school leadership from the perspective of principals, has the obvious limitation of being done with an Australian sample. The work of Brubaker and Simon (1987), again an American project, addressed roles only and did not seek opinions from principals concerning their work and the work of their colleagues. Mangieri and Arnn (1984) provided job dimensions for American principals to rank but did not provide the opportunity to describe the specifics their job dimensions. This project, by providing principals with the opportunity to describe their work through interviews has potential for a significant regional and current contribution the the study of effective principals.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

A description of the methodology used to address the research questions concerning effective school principals is the focus of this chapter. Following a discussion of the rationale for the general research strategy, the approach taken to collect data as well as the process employed to select the four effective principals to be interviewed are described. The procedures for analyzing both the questionnaire and interview data are also outlined. A description of the procedures implemented to assure investigative rigor and trustworthiness concludes the chapter.

Research Strategy

As was discussed in Chapter One, this research project involved two strategies of inquiry -- quantitative and qualitative -- and two methods of data collection: questionnaire and in-depth interview. Although elements of quantitative research were employed in the data collection and analysis pertaining to the characteristics of effective school principals, the main aspects of the project were influenced by naturalistic, qualitative research strategies. The naturalistic mode of inquiry seemed most suited to the study because the intention was to interpret meaning from the perspective of the participant rather than from that of the researcher. Stainback and Stainback (1984) reviewed the salient differences between the qualitative or naturalistic approach and the quantitative or rationalistic approach. A summary of their comparison is presented in Table 3.1. The quantitative or rationalistic paradigm and a "value free" orientation could not totally

serve the purpose of this study because values and beliefs were being examined. Rather than avoid acknowledging values and beliefs, they were viewed as central to the study. As Greenfield (1986) said, "If nothing else, we must understand that the new science of administration will be a science with values and of values" (p.75). Consequently, the research strategy reflects a qualitative orientation to research in educational administration.

Table 3.1

Comparison of Qualitative and Quantitative Research Paradigms

Dimensions	Quantitative (Rationalistic)	Qualitative (Naturalistic)
Perspective	Outsider	Insider
Reality	Stable	Dynamic
Focus	Particularistic	Holistic
Orientation	Verification	Discovery
Data	Objective	Subjective
Conditions	Controlled	Naturalistic
Results	Reliable	Valid

In order to gain insight into effective school leaders, the research strategy reflected certain characteristics of the naturalistic paradigm, particularly in that in-depth interviews were involved. The data collection by the researcher was done as an insider rather than an outsider to the process. The process was dynamic in that

interviews, although beginning with some degree of pre-determined direction, evolved somewhat differently with each individual principal. A holistic rather than particularistic view was employed as a variety of areas and topics were explored with each principal. Discovery of leadership styles and underlying values, rather than the verification of a specific hypothesis, was the objective. Subjectivity was by design an aspect of the interpretation, and the research was conducted in a natural as opposed to controlled setting. To some extent, results and conclusions are probably more valid than reliable because leadership styles may change over time.

Although the shift toward the naturalistic paradigm has not been as accepted nor actively encouraged as Greenfield might prefer, the selection of acceptable methods has broadened. Millard (1984) found the qualitative method she used supported by Patton (1980).

> The issue of selecting methods is no longer one of the dominant paradigm versus the alternative paradigm, of experimental designs with quantitative measurement versus holistic-inductive designs based on qualitative measurement. The debate and competition between paradigms is being replaced by a new paradigm -- a paradigm of choices. The paradigm of choices recognizes that different methods are appropriate for different situations. (p. 19)

The combination of questionnaire and interview methods employed in this study reflects an attempt to use the strategies which are appropriate for achieving different objectives. Nevertheless, the weight given to interviews indicates that the qualitative strategy received greater emphasis.

In-depth interviews were the primary source of data used to enter the worlds of four principals. According to Patton (1980) interviewing is useful for discovering "what is in and on someone else's mind . . . it allows us to enter into the other person's perspective" (p. 196). In addition to focusing on what the

principals said, careful attention was paid to other sources of data which helped reveal the person. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1982), "The qualitative researcher not only has to know how to work with and collect data, but has to have a good sense of what data is" (p. 116). Some of the other data sources used in this study included comments made by those nominating the principal, observations made of their office and school environment, the principal's interactions with others in the school, and documentation on the principal or school which some of the principals provided. The words of each principal were, however, the main sources of data.

Questionnaire Methods

The purpose of the questionnaire was to solicit names of effective principals as well as to obtain the respondents' views about the characteristics of effective principals. Several possible methods of identification were presented in the literature. In their study of effective principals, Blumberg and Greenfield (1980), used reputation as their criterion for selection. They found this method suitable as "nonrandomness was not an issue. . . we wanted to be highly selective" (p.3). Downey (1984), on the other hand, used highly structured criteria for selecting effective school leaders. Both approaches indicated that a traditional random approach would not serve to identify those who are the best -- a unique group within the larger group of principals. The necessary and critical feature of the participants was to be their superiority as principals.

Design and Distribution

A brief questionnaire was designed which asked respondents to identify the general characteristics of effective principals and to nominate one or two principals whom they considered highly effective. The specific question and request were:

> What in your opinion are the characteristics of an effective school principal?
>
> Please identify below one or two principals who, in your opinion, are particularly effective and indicate why you consider each to be effective.

The nominations were to be based on the respondent's personal criteria of effectiveness. However, in the covering letter were outlined some of the characteristics mentioned in the literature as those often associated with effective school leadership. The letter, a copy of which can be found in Appendix A, stated:

> In deciding on a nomination, you may consider whatever criteria or characteristics you regard as important. However, you may wish to include factors such as the principal's success in maintaining levels of academic achievement, developing professional competence of staff, establishing relationships with the community, displaying interpersonal skills, acquiring resources, and maintaining school climate.

Permission to conduct the survey was sought and received from officials in each of three jurisdictions, and copies of letters which indicated approval of the project were distributed with the questionnaire. However, the decision on actual participation was left to each individual.

The questionnaire was sent to 281 individuals, including 269 elementary and junior high principals as well as twelve associate superintendents in three school jurisdictions. A package was mailed to each individual which included: a covering letter explaining the nature of the study and a request for participation (see Appendix B), a letter from officials of the appropriate school board, a questionnaire, and a return stamped envelope. Distribution of questionnaires

through Canada Post was considered to be preferable to using school district mail systems because of the possibility that respondents might be less reluctant to mail information directly to a researcher rather than to a central office. Anonymity was assumed to be vital to candid responses.

Response

Thirty-nine percent of those receiving questionnaires completed and returned them. The numbers of questionnaires mailed and returned for each school jurisdiction are identified in Table 3.2. As indicated in the table, the response rate of approximately forty percent was comparable across the jurisdictions. However, because of differences in size, about six times as many responses were received from the largest as from the smallest jurisdiction.

Table 3.2

Questionnaires Distributed and Returned in each School District

School District	Questionnaires Mailed	Questionnaires Returned	Percent of Return
A	179	70	39%
B	27	12	44%
C	75	28	37%
Total	281	110	39%

In the 110 questionnaires returned ninety-three principals and associate superintendents responded to the question "What in your opinion are the characteristics of an effective school principal?" The group contributed a total of 746 individual statements which were coded and grouped on the basis of similarity. Forty-six categories were identified which were again analyzed and grouped according to seven themes.

Numerous individual principals were nominated in each of the three jurisdictions. Although in each district many names appeared more than once, no principals received a high number of nominations. Seven was the maximum number of times any one principal was nominated. Table 3.3 shows the frequency of nominations in each school district. Fifty-five principals were each nominated by only one respondent and twenty-four were nominated by two. Only twenty principals received three or more nominations.

Several respondents identified characteristics of effective principals but did not nominate principals. Most respondents used the allotted space to nominate two principals. Occasionally only one principal was nominated, while others chose to name three individuals. Three respondents nominated principals from a school jurisdiction other than their own. Three returned questionnaires which included names of principals of high schools or former principals which did not contribute to the bank of nominated effective principals because only practicing elementary and junior high principals were sought.

Table 3.3

Distribution of Number of Principals by Number of Nominations for each School District

Number of Nominations	School District			Total
	A	B	C	
One	38	4	13	55
Two	15	4	5	24
Three	9	1	1	11
Four	0	2	0	2
Five	2	0	1	3
Six	0	0	2	2
Seven	1	0	1	2

Most respondents gave details as to why they considered the principal they nominated to be effective, although several gave names only. Occasionally the characteristics of the principal were identified as those suggested in the first question pertaining to the general characteristics of effective principals. Most responded in detail to the question, although several responses seemed to indicate resentment or anger at the question regarding effective principals. Some examples of this are:

> I dislike the word "effective." We have heard so much the last few years. . . .

I am not nominating anyone at this time; if the rest of the administrators are as busy and "stressed out" as I am, they don't have time for this.

All of our principals are "particularly effective" otherwise they would not retain their positions with this school system.

Four principals were selected to be interviewed on the basis of the following criteria: the number of times they were nominated and the comments related to the nominations, the type of school and school neighborhood or populations, the gender of the principal, and my previous knowledge of the work of the principal. The objective was to interview four principals who were considered by their peers to be effective and who represented a range of situations. Both male and female principals were to be included about whom I did not already have significant opinions either negative or positive. One principal who was nominated many times, and perhaps was an obvious choice for this study, was not chosen. This principal has received international recognition for work in inner-city schools; his leadership style is already documented and well known. One of those nominating him suggested that "He is really in a class of his own."

Interview Methods

Based on the established criteria for selection, three principals representing two of the school districts were initially selected. Each of the three principals was sent a letter seeking his or her participation in the study, outlining the purpose, extent and type of their involvement, a commitment to anonymity, and an option to cancel involvement at any time. A sample of this letter is included in Appendix C. One week after mailing the letter, each principal was telephoned for a response. This approach was chosen rather than to telephone first and perhaps not obtain a

serious or informed commitment. Furthermore, the approach was considered less likely to result in "forced" involvement.

The first principal contacted declined to participate in the study citing time commitments. However, the next two principals responded with enthusiastic acceptance, and interviews with both began within one week. Two more principals were chosen in the following months; both consented to participate. Two of the school districts involved in the study were represented by one principal, one district by two principals.

Pilot Study

Prior to any interviews with the four principals a pilot study was conducted with two individuals. One forty-five minute meeting was held with each of two doctoral students not previously known to me. Both of these students had held positions as principals but were at the time full-time graduate students.

The interviews were tape recorded, transcribed, analyzed and presented to the interviewees for their comments and suggestions. A considerable amount of information and guidance was gained through the pilot study including a sense of the time involved to gather data, practice in listening to and interviewing people, comfort with the recording apparatus, and skill in the analysis of transcribed interviews.

Procedures

In the actual study, three interviews were held with each principal ranging in time from forty-five minutes to one and a half hours. They were tape recorded to allow accurate reproduction of what was said and to permit concentrating on what

the principals were saying. Several researchers recommended this approach to data collection during interviews (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Millard, 1984).

All interviews took place in the principals' offices and were scheduled for one hour, although they often exceeded that time. Participants were made aware that I did not want to interfere in any way with their job responsibilities and that if at any time they wanted to cancel or cut short an interview they would be accommodated. I was also prepared to wait during an interview if a situation arose which required their attention. Although there were a few minor interruptions, without exception it appeared as though each principal gave his or her full attention during each of the the interview sessions.

In addition to providing an opportunity to meet each principal, the initial interview began the process of seeking insights into the lives of those who were considered to be highly effective. In order for the principals to be free to articulate their leadership philosophies and practices, the structure of the interviews was flexible rather than rigid. Because the interview was intended, in part, to reveal the leadership practices as well as underlying values of the participants, it was guided by the implicit question: "What makes this individual a highly effective school principal?" As in the Blumberg and Greenfield (1980) study, participants were first informed that they had been identified by others as being highly effective school principals, and then they were asked to begin talking about themselves, their jobs and their schools The intention was to obtain a picture of the principals' world as seen by the participants. Not all interviews progressed in the same way, although there were occasions when issues raised by previous principals were mentioned to subsequent principals.

Generally, the three interviews with the four principals followed a similar pattern. Initially introductions were made, the process was described and agreed to by the principal, background information on the school and principal was outlined, and the principal was provided with a copy of the comments made by the nominators. The principals were then asked to begin talking about their job; topics varied widely with each principal. The second and third interviews involved more structure, beginning with questions based on the previous interview. The last part of the third interview was left to the principal to expand or elaborate on topics covered during the previous interviews. They were also given the opportunity to introduce new issues or topics. By this point all of the principals were comfortable enough to talk freely. Without exception all four used this time to relate an anecdote, explain a pet peeve, or elaborate on a pressing issue. An interesting phenomenon previously identified by Richardson, Dohrenwend and Klein (1965) and cited by Millard (1984) was observed:

> It has long been recognized that individuals who meet as strangers and form a relationship which both know to be transitory may reveal confidences which they would not reveal to acquaintances or to anyone with whom they foresee a continuing relationship. (p. 110)

During the interviews brief notes, reflections and questions were kept although writing was kept to a minimum. Immediately following each interview perceptions, unanswered questions and observations were recorded in a notebook for future reference.

Analysis of the Data

The tapes of all of the interviews were transcribed by two graduate students who were in Canada only temporarily. They were not known to the principals, had few contacts in the field of education and were were not given the real names of the

principals. The printed copy of each transcript had sufficiently wide margins to allow space for comments, questions and coding.

The analysis of the interviews and subsequent writing of each principal's story followed approximately the same sequence. First, each tape was listened to in its entirety and minor corrections were made on the transcripts. Second, each transcript was read again at least twice with extensive note taking in the margins. Third, a list was made of all topics and issues covered during the three interviews. Through this process, a picture of each principal emerged -- of their leadership style, practices and values. Five to eight dominant themes became apparent for each principal. The transcripts were re-read, statements were coded according to the theme, and quotations were chosen to highlight the stories.

Upon completion of an initial draft of each story, a copy was sent to thew principal along with a letter (Appendix D), asking for confirmation and elaboration. Specifically, principals were asked to do the following:

> 1. Indicate areas where I have misunderstood, exaggerated, or minimized what you have said. On a separate sheet or in the margins write any changes or corrections.
>
> 2. Indicate areas where what I have said is perhaps too sensitive or controversial and which you would like left out or changed.
>
> 3. Since our interviews and upon reading my analysis is there anything you would like to add or explain further? Feel free to do so, either on the copy I have given you or on a separate page.

Very minor changes or suggestions were made although, on several occasions, the participants asked that sensitive or controversial aspects be toned down or deleted. All four principals indicated that the accounts of the interviews were accurate and, for them, interesting reading.

The stories, or written accounts of each principal, became a description of the themes that emerged during analysis of the conversations with the principal.

Accounts included many of the principals' own words, a method employed by Millard (1984), which she cites Patton (1980) for support:

> Sufficient description and direct quotation should be included to allow the reader to enter into the situation and thoughts of the people represented in the report. (p. 343)

In subsequent chapters the stories of the principals are presented. Comments made by respondents when nominating these principal are included in Appendix E. The names of schools and principals are fictitious. In most cases principals chose the names they wished to use although occasionally I was asked to create a name. Some details within each story have been changed on occasion to protect anonymity of the principal and others.

Trustworthiness Considerations

A researcher who adopts a qualitative or naturalistic strategy must be concerned with investigative rigor and trustworthiness. Guba and Lincoln, two researchers who advocate the naturalistic approach, have dealt extensively with the issue of trustworthiness which has been an important aspect of rationalistic or quantitative inquiry. According to Guba and Lincoln (1982):

It is not unreasonable to ask whether naturalistic inquiry can also meet those criteria or, in the event that the criteria are deemed inappropriate, meet some new criteria that are more appropriate and of approximately equal power in differentiating good from bad, inadequate, or untrustworthy research." (p. 246).They maintain that naturalistic research must address the questions of truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality which relate to four standards of quantitative research: internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity. Guba and Lincoln

propose four comparable criteria in the naturalistic paradigm: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. These four aspects of trustworthiness were taken into account in the methodology of this study.

Credibility

Since the realities and truths pursued by qualitative researchers are often in the minds of those being researched, the question becomes, "Do the data sources (most often humans) find the inquirer's analysis, formulation, and interpretation to be credible (believable)?" (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 246). They suggest prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and member checks to enhance credibility. In this study I took time to see and time to think in an effort to achieve credibility. With reasonable attention to the demands on the principals, considerable time was spent talking to them and allowing for time to reflect on our conversations prior to the next meeting. Three meetings with each principal over a period of three to four weeks helped to ensure credibility. Principals were also provided with drafts of the analysis and given the opportunity to confirm or elaborate on what was written.

Transferability

Those involved in rationalistic inquiry place hign value on research that is generalizable. Although not a prime concern of the naturalistic approach, some attention must be paid to the transferability of findings. Guba and Lincoln (1982) suggest two approaches for dealing with this aspect of trustworthiness: theoretical and purposive sampling, as well as attention to thick description. Both aspects were addressed during the study. All elementary and junior high principals and associate superintendents from three school jurisdictions were involved in

suggesting characteristics of effective leaders as well as nominating individuals who they felt met their criteria of effectiveness. This was assumed to increase the likelihood of highly effective principals being nominated for interviews. Thick description was achieved by three to five hours of conversation with each principal. Readers are presented with a sufficiently detailed account of each principal to permit judgements about transferability to other situations.

Dependability

Reliability is a concern in quantitative research. This implies replicability which is not necessarily possible or desirable in naturalistic pursuits because "designs are emergent so that changes are built in with conscious intent" (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 247). The concern in naturalistic research is more for stability which was achieved by keeping a complete and accurate audit trail outlining all methodological steps, decisions, reflections and raw data. Changes in the original intent of the research, although well thought out, were adopted as situations and insights developed. The steps taken to conduct this research could easily be duplicated by another researcher, although results would likely be different.

Confirmability

In the rationalistic paradigm the researcher is usually detached or attempts to be strictly an objective element in the process. This is not often the case in the naturalistic field. According to Guba and Lincoln (1982), "The onus of objectivity ought therefore to be removed from the inquirer and placed on data: It is not the inquirer's certifiability we are interested in but the confirmability of the data" (p. 247). They suggest ensuring confirmability by consciously being aware of personal assumptions, biases, prejudices, expectations and motivation concerning

the phenomenon being studied. In order to manage this a record was kept as part of the audit trail, showing how conclusions can be traced back to the raw data.

Summary

The research strategy used to investigate the principalship from the perspective of the principal involved both quantitative and qualitative methods. An analysis of qualitative methods serves to support the heavy reliance on the approach in this study. Methods used in the two data collection processes included both a questionnaire and in-depth interviews. Recommended procedures for ensuring investigative trustworthiness -- credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability -- were adopted.

CHAPTER IV

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

In this chapter are presented the results of analyzing the responses to the questionnaire sent to principals and assistant superintendents in three school districts. The focus of the analysis was on the major themes reflected in the statements which respondents made about effective school principals. After the major themes are identified, each is described in terms of the specific characteristics associated with the theme.

Identification of Themes

In addition to being asked to nominate principals whom they considered to be highly effective, respondents were asked to respond to the question "What in your opinion are the characteristics of an effective school principal?" In the 110 questionnaires returned, ninety-three principals and associate superintendents responded to the question; they contributed a total of 746 individual statements concerning desirable characteristics. The response from each school district is indicated in Table 4.1.

Most of the individuals responding to the question did so in point form, offering several characteristics that they considered contributed to principal effectiveness. Occasionally only one characteristic was mentioned; however, one respondent listed twenty-three. The average number of characteristics identified by a respondent was eight.

In the first stage of the analysis, each individual statement or characteristic was written on a small file card and coded with a number indicating the school district and respondent. Some statements which seemed to indicate more than one characteristic were recorded twice and considered as two separate items. An example of this is the following statement: "Based on a commitment to children, encourages professional development in teaching staff." In the analysis, this was considered to indicate that a principal was student centered as well as committed to professional development.

Table 4.1

Distribution of Responses on Characteristics of Effective Principals by School District

School District	Number of Questionnaires Returned	Number of Responses to Question	Number of Comments
A	70	61	505
B	12	9	69
C	28	23	172
Total	110	93	746

When all ninety-three responses from principals and associate superintendents had been recorded, a process of grouping and analysis began. Cards were first grouped according to statements which seemed to be almost

identical. Because of the brevity of some responses, several statements were somewhat ambiguous; for example, "consultative decision making" required interpretation. Consultative decision making was assumed to mean in consultation with staff members; thus, this statement was used both in the category of the principal being a decision maker as well as that of a team builder.

Following the initial grouping of cards, each was coded on the back with a category name, for example, "visible." The cards were left for several days, shuffled and the process was repeated. During the process of regrouping some new categories were formed, several combined, and others eliminated completely. Eventually forty-six categories of characteristics were identified. The forty-six categories were written on cards and the same process was repeated, although on a smaller scale. Through a process of re-reading and reflecting on the individual statements and categories, seven themes of effective leadership emerged.

Effective School Leadership

The themes, more than a list of characteristics of effective school principals, highlight two aspects of effective leadership: the ability to deal with what is involved in doing the job of running a school, and the type of individual, personally and professionally, most suited to the role. The themes and the number of statements associated with each are outlined in Table 4.2. The seven themes related to effective school leadership range from instructional leadership, most frequently mentioned, which received 179 comments from seventy-six respondents, to communication skills, least mentioned, which received fifty-seven comments from forty-one respondents. The five other themes identified by principals and associate

superintendents are: human relations skills, leadership style, school management, vision and personal characteristics.

What follows is an overview of the categories of characteristics within each theme and examples of the comments related to each. Themes are presented in rank order, beginning with the area which received the most emphasis -- instructional leadership.

Table 4.2

Themes in Characteristics of Effective School Principals

Theme	Number of Respondents	Number of Comments
Instructional Leadership	76	179
Human Relations Skills	74	161
Leadership Style	58	100
School Management	58	92
Vision	54	76
Personal Characteristics	46	81
Communication Skills	41	57

Instructional Leadership

One hundred and seventy-nine of the statements made by respondents to the question related to the principal's role as an instructional leader. These statements, which were placed in eleven categories, describe the uniqueness of the principal's

leadership role. The characteristics associated with instructional leadership are identified in Table 4.3. The categories and statements relate to characteristics which identify those who are effective in running schools, as opposed to characteristics of leaders in a more general sense. Although instructional leadership was specifically mentioned as a characteristic only five times, many respondents articulated specifics that could be categorized as aspects of instructional leadership. The highest ranking category was defined by thirty-five comments made by twenty-nine respondents.

Table 4.3

Characteristics of Effective Principals Related to Instructional Leadership

Characteristic	Number of Respondents	Number of Comments
1. Is student centered	29	35
2. Has high expectations	30	31
3. Is knowledgeable about curriculum and research	28	28
4. Encourages professional development	19	22
5. Pays attention to school climate	17	18
6. Is a strong teacher	11	11
7. Attends to staffing needs	8	9
8. Is involved in staff evaluation	8	8
9. Is knowledgeable about child development	6	6
10. Maintains a discipline policy	6	6
11. Acts as an instructional leader	5	5

Student Centered. The most frequently mentioned characteristic in the area of instructional leadership related to the principal being student centered. Twenty-nine respondents felt that principals demonstrate a focus on children in ways such as the following:

> Loves kids . . . makes the learning of children the center of all decisions . . . defends actions/decisions from a pedagogical base . . . runs a school that fosters an environment in which the students learning is of paramount importance.

Responses indicate that instructional leadership is, to a great degree, centered around the service schools provide to children and the attention the principal gives to the individual needs of each student. Respondents appeared to recognize the complexity of running a school while maintaining a focus on children. One respondent pointed out that principals should have the "ability to walk carefully and effectively through a variety of situations and still maintain support for a common cause -- the well-being of children."

High expectations. Thirty respondents made thirty-one comments pertaining to high expectations; expectations not only for students and staff members, but for themselves as principals. An effective principal, according to those responding to the question, "has the courage to insist on a good performance by the staff" and "to set high expectations for staff and others." Part of maintaining high expectations for students involves having a belief that "all students can learn" and a willingness to insist on "high, but attainable, expectations for student achievement."

Knowledgeable of curriculum and research. Twenty-eight statements from principals and associate superintendents related to the curriculum,

to what is being taught in the classroom. A knowledge of both curriculum areas and current practices and procedures, as well as insight into the latest educational research were specified as characteristics of an effective principal. The principal should be "knowledgeable about the entire program of studies" and "place an emphasis on curriculum" while making certain to "implement new ideas on a selective basis." Research was mentioned by several respondents. Principals are expected to follow current research as well as "encourage research by staff members."

Encourages professional development. Nineteen respondents contributed twenty-two statements related to the principal's role in professional development. "Active, ongoing learning by the administrator" and a "commitment to continued professional growth" were both aspects of professional development mentioned. Several respondents indicated that it is the principal's role to "gain staff commitment to professional development" and to "demonstrate a willingness to invest in staff development."

Pays attention to school climate. The school climate, or the environment where students are expected to achieve and teachers to teach, was a concern for seventeen respondents. Comments related to school climate included: "creates a positive, supportive and enthusiastic teaching and learning environment" and "strives to make the school an exciting place for staff, students and parents." Statements dealing with climate indicate a concern for those involved in the daily operations of the school -- students and teachers, as well as those associated with schools -- parents and the extended community. The principal, as one respondent pointed out, "makes the whole process a very worthwhile and valuable learning experience," while another commented that the principal should "promote happiness

in the the work place." The principal, in order to maintain a positive environment must also be prepared to "read and adjust to changes in the school climate."

Strong teacher. Eleven respondents indicated that in order for principals to be effective instructional leaders who are able to encourage, evaluate and monitor excellent teaching, they must first be "experienced and successful teachers." This involves being "instructionally knowledgeable and assertive" while possessing "lots of teaching experience" and being able to "model good teaching."

Attends to staffing needs. Although a focus on children appears to be the key element in instructional leadership, eight respondents also indicated the importance of staffing abilities. The concern here is that the principal have "good staff relations" and "allow professionals to be professionals" while "organizing and using staff talents and abilities to their maximum." In order to maintain staff relations, use staff effectively, and recruit the best teachers the principal should "have a plan for selecting and using staff talents."

Involved in staff evaluation. Perhaps part of attending to staff needs is the added dimension of teacher evaluation. "Regular evaluation of teachers" and using "effective instructional supervision skills" were some of the comments related to evaluation made by eight respondents.

Knowledgeable about child development. According to one respondent an effective instructional leader "should know how children learn and translate the needs of kids into action" according to one respondent. Six individuals made similar statements related to a prineipal's understanding of child development.

Maintains a discipline policy. Establishing "clear behavior expectations" as well as being "fair, just and consistent in a discipline policy," and similar comments were mentioned six times.

The eleven categories established under instructional leadership are indicative of the complexity of the principal's role. The categories of characteristics relate to four areas: students, curriculum, teachers, and school climate. Being student centered, knowledgeable about child development, possessing clear and high expectation, and establishing a clear discipline policy are all aspects of instructional leadership related to students. What is being taught in the classroom is of significant concern to effective principals. A knowledge of curricular areas and current practices, insight into the latest educational research and an emphasis on professional development are aspects related to the curriculum. In addition to a concern for children and a knowledge of curriculum, principals are expected to ensure high quality teaching. High expectations for both the principal and staff, on-going teacher evaluation, a concern for the professional development of teachers, and a demonstrated ability to teach are all characteristics respondents expect will help a principal monitor and model high quality teaching. Attention to school climate is the fourth aspect of instructional leadership identified. Perhaps climate can be seen as a indicator of the success of the principal's ability to manage the intricate relationship between students, teaching staff and the curriculum.

Human Relations Skills

In addition to being a capable instructional leader, those characteristics that identified principals as having the ability to work with others, to relate to them, encourage them, and to support them, were the second most frequently mentioned. Seventy-four respondents made 157 comments related to human relations skills. The highest ranking category, strong people skills, was identified by eighty-six comments made by fifty respondents. Eight comments from seven individuals pertaining to the principal providing recognition made up the lowest ranking

category. The categories of characteristics associated with human relations skill are identified in Table 4.4.

Strong people skills. Fifty people made eighty-six comments related to the specific people skills a principal should posses in order to relate well to to others. Comments in the area of people skills were most often concerned with caring, encouraging, openness and rapport. Having a "warm rapport with staff, students and community" while "respecting the dignity and worth of others" and being "approachable, kind, helpful, patient and non-condemning" are examples of the people skills identified. The principal should "like people," be a "positive person," and "understand people and their needs." Recognizing that principals have responsibilities for both students and teachers, one respondent stated that the principal should be "able to relate to both children and adults."

Table 4.4

Characteristics of Effective Principals Related to Human Relations Skills

Characteristic	Number of Respondents	Number of Comments
1. Has strong people skills	50	86
2. Works with community, staff, parents, and students	25	32
3. Provides support and encouragement	16	21
4. Builds a team concept	10	14
5. Provides recognition	7	8

Works with community, staff, parents and students. In addition to relating to individuals, twenty-five respondents indicated that the principal must be able to manage the many groups of people associated with schools, ensuring that the interests of each are met. Thirty-two comments define this area. Having an "understanding of families" and "genuinely caring for the community" contribute to effectiveness. One respondent said that the principal should "believe that parents, students and teachers are partners in learning" while another stated that a principal should "keep in mind first his pupils, secondly his teachers, and thirdly his parents." Parents should be "viewed as partners" and "feel comfortable with the principal." It is important that the principal "know and use community power structures," according to one person responding to the question.

Provides support and encouragement. Twenty-one statements from principals and associate superintendents related to the principal's ability to provide support and encouragement. Being "highly supportive in a knowledgeable way" and a "mentor, supporter and encourager" were mentioned a number of times by those responding to the questionnaire. Providing "guidance, feedback and constructive criticism" were also aspects of supporting and encouraging both students and teachers.

Builds a team concept. Ten respondents contributed fourteen comments related to the principal's ability to "develop a team concept." In order to do this principals should "use the strength of individuals to form a cohesive, supportive group" and "promote teamwork" by "stimulating staff members to think cooperativly on real problems confronting the school." While promoting team work the principal should retain authority and responsibility and as one respondents

stated, "get along well with colleagues but be willing to assert authority if necessary."

Provides recognition. "Recognizes the importance of positive recognition for students and staff" and similar comments were made eight times. The principal, according to one respondent, "does not grab all of the glory" for accomplishments but instead "allows, encourages and recognizes the successes of staff, students and parents."

The emphasis on human relations skills by those responding to the questionnaire indicated the importance principals and associate superintendents place on these skills. The role of the principal is seen as one that is in constant contact with people, and the ability to effectively relate to a variety of individuals and groups in different situations does much to contribute to administrative success. Strong people skills are an asset for all leaders, but as can be seen by the results of this questionnaire, there are specific skills unique to the role of an educational leader.

Leadership Style

The third theme of effective school leadership relates to leadership style. Fifty-eight respondents contributed one hundred comments about what they considered to be the components of an effective leadership style. These comments fell into eight categories which are identified in Table 4.5. Decision making ability was the highest ranking category receiving twenty-five comments, while a democratic approach and the principal's willingness to speak out received only four and three comments respectively.

Table 4.5

Characteristics of Effective Principals Related to Leadership Style

Characteristic	Number of Respondents	Number of Comments
1. Makes decisions	22	25
2. Clearly leads	21	22
3. Is visible	17	19
4. Is a risk taker	11	12
5. Is flexible	7	8
6. Is creative	6	7
7. Is democratic	4	4
8. Speaks out	3	3

Makes decisions. The ability to make decisions is a characteristic that twenty-two respondents considered essential. This involves the ability to "carefully analyze and make decisions" and "decide what should be done, if anything." Being a "proactive decision maker" and a "fast thinker" contribute to effectiveness. Many respondents indicated that the principal should involve others in the decision making process, practicing "consultative decision making" and "collegial, group decision making" while "allowing staff a certain range of professional latitude in participation in decision making." Decision making involves being "decisive" and "not vacillating -- once the data are in the decision is

made." Decision making is complex and situational as one respondent indicated, a principal "needs to know when to listen, act, speak, ignore and walk away."

Clearly leads. Although many respondents made comments pertaining to collegiality, group decision making and team building, it was clear, at least according to twenty-two statements made by twenty-one individuals, that the principal must clearly be the school leader. "Strong leadership" and "natural leadership ability" were both highlighted. Leadership "cannot be delegated" and "must be obvious to others" according to two respondents. Having the "ability to gain the confidence, respect, and loyalty of those with whom one works" while not getting "too far ahead of those being led" contribute to strong and effective leadership.

Visible. Seventeen respondents contributed nineteen comments pertaining to the "visibility of the school principal. Being "available in the school . . . in and out of the classroom . . . (and) always around" are important aspects of a leadership style according to those responding to the question. "The administrator, as a leader of a group of professionals, must be "available, affable and able" stressed one respondent, "visiting classes and students," said another. Management by "wandering around" was frequently mentioned.

Risk taker. "Not being afraid to make a mistake or take a risk" and being "courageous" are examples of what eleven respondents felt were aspects of a leadership style related to being a "risk taker." The effective principal also "encourages and supports individual initiatives and risk taking in others."

Flexible. Being "flexible," "willing to adapt" and "flexible yet organized" are examples of the six comments made by seven respondents concerning the flexibility of principals.

Creative. Six respondents mentioned the need for the principal to demonstrate creativity as part of a leadership style. Creativity involves being " innovative," "progressive" and an "individual thinker."

Democratic. Being democratic was an aspect of leadership style mentioned by only four of those responding to the question. According to one respondent, "A principal should provide a leadership which is democratic in principle, but in subtle ways shows the effectiveness of a benevolent dictator."

Speaks out. "Speaking out" or "taking a stand on educational issues" was an important characteristic to three individual responding to the question.

The principal should have a strong and powerful impact on the school according to those responding to the question. The principal should clearly be the leader, and decisions should be made with authority and influence. Visibility is also highlighted as an aspect of a leadership style which contributes to effectiveness. The specifics of how one is to lead were identified by a number of principals and associate superintendents. Although many of the characteristics were mentioned only a few times, they contribute to the overall picture of an effective leadership style. These specific characteristics include taking risks, working in a democratic mode, speaking out, and demonstrating creativity and flexibility.

School Management

Although not identified as being as significant as the people aspects of leading a school, the management necessities of school operations were identified by fifty-eight principals and associate superintendents as having some importance. Ninety-two comments were generated by this group. The six categories of school management and the number of comments associated with each are identified in Table 4.6. Being organized was the highest ranking category identified by thirty-

two respondents. Four principals stressed the importance of managing well while avoiding being a "bean counter."

Table 4.6

Characteristics of Effective Principals Related to School management

Characteristic	Number of Respondents	Number of Comments
1. Is organized	32	36
2. Acts as a facilitator	17	21
3. Plans for the future	12	14
4. Is a business manager	8	10
5. Delegates	6	7
6. Is not a "bean counter"	4	4

Organized. Thirty-six comments from thirty-two respondents related to the principal's ability to be organized. Possessing "good organizational skills," being both a "capable manager," and "efficient" were all mentioned as being desirable characteristics. "Doing the job quietly and efficiently" and "managing the paper jungle" contribute to being organized. One respondent explained that a "good manager of a school is apparent when financial, human and physical resources are well managed." Being "able to manage time and meet deadlines" was also stressed by one individual responding to the question.

Facilitator. "Knowing where to locate resources and whom to contact for assistance" as well as "making sure staff have support materials and necessary equipment to work with" are examples of how seventeen respondents described the principal's role as a "facilitator." Other comments included "being a good reporter -- attending meetings and conveying information back to the staff" and "removing hindrances that block effective teaching" while "linking resources in the community and district with staff and student needs."

Planner. Twelve respondents made fourteen comments related to the principal's ability to plan. This involves, according to one respondent, "observing what is, knowing what should be, and deciding on the most effective way to get there." Planning involves "looking ahead and seeing trends and selecting what looks best for the future of the school." The principal should have a "strong sense of direction" and be able to "plan at least five years ahead."

Manages the business aspects. Having a "business sense," being "financially accountable" and similar comments concerning the business aspects of running a school were made by eight respondents.

Delegates. Six of those responding to the question indicated that the principal must "know how to delegate" in order to be an effective and efficient school manager. The principal should be "willing to let others become leaders" and "discover and utilize the talents of others." According to one respondent "delegating allows the principal to concentrate on fewer things and thus use his/her time more efficiently."

Not a "bean counter." Four respondents stressed that although management aspects of school leadership are important, they should not take over.

Principals should "concentrate on important things, not bean counting" by "putting the needs of people ahead of paper work and other administrative trivia."

Paper work, financial planning, management responsibilities and delegating are all aspects of leading schools. Respondents to the question concerning effective school leadership seem to indicate that the administrative aspects of school leadership, although not as vital as those aspects involving people and curriculum, do warrant some emphasis. While not "getting bogged down in details" an effective manager gets the "administrative trivia out of the way in order to concentrate on the "important things."

Vision

Often identified as one of the most vital characteristics of an effective leader, vision received some emphasis but was not considered to be of prime importance by the respondents. Nevertheless, fifty-four principals and associate superintendents provided seventy-six statements related to vision. The five categories associated with vision are identified in Table 4.7. Being goal oriented was the highest ranking category receiving twenty-five comments from twenty-one individuals. Articulating a clear philosophy, the lowest ranking category, received nine comments from nine respondents.

Goal oriented. The effective principal "gives the school purpose . . . sets school level goals . . . (and is) committed to achieving goals" according to twenty-one of those responding to the question. Being goal oriented involves "identifying results in measurable terms" and "assisting staff in goal setting." The principal, according to one respondent, "sets realistic goals and priorities which enhance students learning and behavior."

Vision for the future. Nineteen respondents articulated twenty comments concerning a principal's "vision of what the school should be." Vision is described by one respondent as the "ability to foresee a better state of being for the school and uniting the entire school community to work toward a common goal." Another describes administrative success as being able to, "articulate a vision for the school; communicate that vision to the staff, students and parents; and provide the leadership that will enable the vision to be realized."

Table 4.7

Characteristics of Effective Principals Related to Vision

Characteristic	Number of Respondents	Number of Comments
1. Is goal oriented	21	25
2. Has a vision of the future	19	20
3. Is a change agent	10	11
4. Sees the larger view	10	11
5. Has a clear philosophy	9	9

Change agent. "Getting enthusiasm built for positive change by using staff ideas" and "maintaining stable movement towards goals" are ways ten respondents described how a principal acts as a change agent in order to realize a vision.

Larger view. Being able to "see the job in context with the larger system and society" and being "aware of the world" illustrate how ten individuals described

the importance of a principal seeing the "larger view . . . keeping things in perspective . . . (and) seeing how one proaction or reaction will effect the whole school."

Clear philosophy. Nine respondents described the importance of the principal maintaining a clear philosophy of education in general and of the school in particular. "Having a personal philosophy of education . . . thinking about teaching and learning . . . (and) being able to express clearly beliefs about students, teachers, schools, parents and community" are ways in which respondents indicated that an effective principal articulate their philosophy.

Vision is an aspect of school leadership which, at least for fifty-four of those responding to the question, contributes to principal effectiveness. Vision involves maintaining a view of the school in terms of its position within the community and society in general, projecting into the future, setting goals, and causing others to "buy into" a philosophy which will lead to positive direction and change.

Personal Characteristics

Several of those responding to the question asking for characteristics of an effective school principal identified personality and character traits. Eighty-one comments from forty-six respondents related to the theme of personal characteristics; they are identified in Table 4.8. The characteristic most often mentioned was enthusiasm, identified by sixteen respondents. Only seven individuals identified intelligence as a desirable trait.

Enthusiasm. Effective principals "love their job" according to nineteen comments from sixteen respondents. They are "enthusiastic and able to instill this enthusiasm in others around them." They have a "commitment to education" and

are "competitive and out selling education." Enthusiasm is not reserved for their professional lives as one individual pointed out, effective principals have a "zest for life and learning." According to one respondent balance is the key, in that the principal "has stamina; blends family, work and recreation into a vibrant lifestyle that results in long but productive days and weeks."

Table 4.8

Characteristics of Effective Principals Related to Personal Characteristics

Characteristic	Number of Respondents	Number of Comments
1. Is enthusiastic	16	19
2. Acts with integrity	12	14
3. Has high energy	12	13
4. Displays a sense of humor	11	11
5. Handles pressure	9	9
6. Demonstrates confidence	8	8
7. Is intelligent	7	7

Integrity. Twelve respondents stressed that "integrity" is a vital aspect of leadership which involves being "professional . . . open and honest in dealing with people . . . (and) well liked and highly respected." According to one respondent, "While possessing a good deal of skill and knowledge, the principal must cultivate an attitude of humility."

Energetic. "High energy and stamina" contribute to principal effectiveness according to twelve respondents. "Their work energizes them-- they do not find it draining" and they have a "good mental attitude and physical stamina."

Sense of humor. "A sense of humor is helpful!" stressed one respondent. Eleven of those responding to the question believe that the ability to "take a joke" and "share humor with staff and students" contributes to principal effectiveness.

Handles pressure. "Emotional stability" and being a "fast thinker" are ways nine respondents see the the principal being able to handle the pressures of the job. "Stress is not a word in their vocabulary," said one.

Confident. An effective principal "is secure . . . has a strong self-concept . . . (and) sees self as competent" according to eight respondents. Confidence also involves the ability to "admit mistakes" and "recognize ones limitations."

Intelligent. For seven respondents "intelligence" is a factor contributing to success. The principal should be "knowledgeable" but also possess a good deal of "common sense."

Some of those traits mentioned would assist the principal in coping with the pressures of the job -- high energy, a sense of humor and the ability to handle pressure. Other characteristics, including a sense of humor, are perhaps helpful in making the principal easier for others, to relate to -- integrity and enthusiasm. It could be that intelligence is a assumed characteristic, and therefore not often mentioned in relation to effective leadership.

Communication Skills

Although the skills of an excellent communicator were not identified to the same extent as some of the other characteristics, they do bear discussion. Forty-one principals and associate superintendents contributed fifty-seven comments related to the ability of principals to communicate effectively. The four aspects of communication are identified in Table 4.9. Those responding dealt primarily with the ability of the principal to get the message across to others which was the highest ranking category receiving thirty-two comments. Practicing good public relations, which received only three comments, was the least mentioned characteristic.

Table 4.9

Characteristics of Effective Principals Related to Communication Skills

Characteristic	Number of Respondents	Number of Comments
1. Communicates clearly	30	32
2. Models	9	12
3. Listens	10	10
4. Relates to public	3	3

Communicates clearly. Thirty-two comments were generated by thirty respondents related to the principal's ability to "communicate clearly" with "staff, students, colleagues and the public." The principal "must be able to clearly let people know where they are" by "maintaining channels of communication" and

"possessing excellent communication skills -- oral and written." Communication was described by one respondents as being:

> . . . subtle and obtuse or explicit and direct. It isn't always verbal but can be postural, positional or physical. An effective administrator is able to use meta-cognition to receive and project this communication.

Models. The principal who "sets an example . . . models vision and commitment . . . leads by doing more than by telling . . . (and) provides a positive role model" uses an active form of communication to lead effectively according to twelve comments from nine respondents. The emphasis is on "action as well as talk!"

Listens. Listening to others is a form of communication highlighted by ten respondents. Being able to "listen to people and display an attitude of real concern for their problems" and to "hear what people are communication to you and each other " are ways a principal can be a "good listener."

Public relations. Three individuals mentioned "public relation skills" as an aspect of communication related to effective leadership.

Communication as an aspect of leadership, although not as highly rated as other characteristics, is vital to success according to many respondents. As a theme communication was the lowest ranked of the seven themes of effective school leadership, but communicating clearly was one of the most frequently mentioned individual characteristics. Communication is seen primarily as originating from the principal and directed to others. Forty-seven comments pertained to the principal communicating to others (communicates clearly, models, pubic relations), while only ten comments stressed the need for the principal to be a good listener.

Summary

Because this survey was conducted primarily with school principals, in addition to the small number of associate superintendents who are involved in supervising principals, the characteristics of effective principals identified probably are those to which school administrators aspire and may be indicative of the way they define their roles and responsibilities. Seven themes emerged when principals and associate superintendents identified the characteristics they believed to be critical in those who administer schools. The picture which emerges is that of a master teacher and educator, possessing the necessary managerial, communication, and people skills -- coupled with a leadership style and personality traits suited to the role of a school principal. This individual, with a clear vision for education and a focus on children, personifies the ideal in a school principal, at least according to those who perform that role on a daily basis.

Table 4.10

Six Main Characteristics of Effective Principals

Characteristic	Number of Respondents	Number of Comments
1. Has strong people skills	50	86
2. Is organized	32	36
3. Is student centered	29	35
4. Communicates clearly	30	32
5. Has high expectations	30	31
6. Works with community; staff, parents and students	25	32

The six main individual characteristics, regardless of what theme they are associated with, are identified on Table 4.10. They range from people skills, defined by eighty-six comments from fifty respondents, to working with community, staff, parents and students which was identified by twenty-five people in thirty-two comments. The general image is that of a highly organized school principal concerned primarily with the needs of people -- students, staff, parents and community -- who is able to communicate while striving for the very best.

CHAPTER V

PAUL O'GRADY

The profile of Paul O'Grady, based on a composite of the comments made by the five respondents who nominated him, reveals various aspects of his personal characteristics and educational philosophy. He is described as being a caring and approachable person, who believes in people, and is sensitive to the needs of others -- especially children. Paul has a unique philosophy of education, is committed to a particular vision and is able to encourage others to commit to that vision. He is a dynamic and creative principal who knows how to make things happen. His knowledge about what resources are available and the ability to gain access to them has contributed to his success as a school principal.

Sharing, Caring, Helping and Learning

Queen Street Elementary - Junior High School is situated on the fringe of the inner city of a large metropolitan area. The 200 elementary and 110 junior high students come from a variety of home settings; many characterized by transiency, disruption, family violence, poverty, and lack of family structure. The students are attracted to the school from all over the city because of its reputation for caring about kids and for considering all applicants. A large number of the students are native or immigrant children; academically many are several years behind their peers from other schools.

In spite of these apparent negative or difficult aspects, a visitor is immediately struck by the attractive physical appearance of the school building and

the apparent work ethic evident in the school. Outside the main office, pictures depicting several decades of students are displayed. The school has a rich heritage, and a feeling of pride is evident partly because the school principal, Paul O'Grady, has made improving the physical appearance of the school one of his prime concerns. The school is very bright and clean; large open areas are utilized by staff and students. There is no apparent division between elementary and junior high areas, native and multi-cultural components are evident, and students' work is proudly displayed throughout the school. Vandalism is not a concern at Queen Street. Paul offered the following explanation:

> We've really spiffed up this school. It has cost a lot of money, not to us, but the squeaky wheel does get the grease. We had the school painted, and vandalism is practically none, in fact we have one of the lowest vandalism rates in the city. Now for the inner city that is good.

He is proud to draw attention to the work emphasis evident as he shows a visitor around the school, stopping in to observe classes and talk to students.

Paul pointed out that inner city schools have special needs: "Inner city schools need more funding, simply because we need to have lower ratios, smaller classes." The pupil/teacher ratio at Queen Street is smaller than that usually found in other schools, and special programs are in place including a daily snack program for the elementary children. Paul is adamant in his concern that more money is needed in order to effectively meet the needs of the children. Outside agencies are used to supplement the snack program and to provide such necessities as winter parkas for the school crossing guards. He spends a great deal of time soliciting funds for the school:

> Well I do a lot, because I know quite a few people -- somebody will always help out. I use them as contacts. The Rotary gave us $700 for our crossing guards. We bought jackets because our kids wouldn't go on crossing guard because they didn't have proper

clothing. We bought boots, mitts and really nice jackets. It has been very successful.

Sharing, Caring, Helping and Learning - this motto, displayed throughout the school, reflects the operating philosophy which is encouraged and nurtured by Paul. He is quick to point out that it began, at least in principle, prior to his arrival at Queen Street School:

> It is not a matter of just coming in and taking over. There has to be a base somewhere and when that base has been established you can go from there. People in this school have been working really hard to make this place successful.

Under Paul's leadership, Queen Street School is quickly establishing a reputation as an excellent inner city school. Paul has attracted media attention which pleases him because it opens the eyes of those who need to know about education, particularly in the inner city. The publicity provides him with a much needed public forum. One newspaper writer, after visiting the school and talking to teachers, students and administrators described the school as being "a magical place." Paul was delighted with this description. He attributes the magic to the special relationship between the students and the staff. "The magic comes from the staff and the students, just working together. I'm convinced of that."

A Principal with a Vision

Paul is not one to stand still. "I haven't held positions in one school for very long, usually about two or three years." He has been principal of Queen Street School now for two and a half years, and he is beginning to prepare himself to move on. Paul constantly is seeking challenges, and by his own admission gets bored once he reaches his goals.

He entered the field of education "through the back door" and has held a variety of positions in the past twenty years. He seeks appointments where he has considerable control and power to implement his vision of what schools should be for children. He does not apologize for his many posts but fears others may have the wrong impression and question his commitment. Of particular satisfaction to him was the opportunity to work from the planning stages in developing a new high school and several new elementary schools. On planning schools he said:

> I like planning schools. I want places where there is lots of light and little places where children can sit and talk. We designed nooks into all the schools. The whole concept was of teacher versus student places. We got 250 people together from all walks of life and said, "Okay, we are going to spend the morning talking about an ideal education, what we want for children and what kind of place we can carry this out." From that we wrote a philosophy and phoned the architect and said, "Here is the philosophy. Can you design a building?"

Paul does acknowledge that the position at Queen Street School has been the most rewarding of his career. As he prepares to leave, he has doubts; yet he knows if he stays too long he will become bored, less vital and consequently less effective. Paul explained his ambivalence:

> We are making such progress. I feel good about what we are doing here, and so I feel like withdrawing that (transfer) application. I did put on it that I am only interested if it suits my style. I could stay longer but it's just been my nature to move around. I don't think it is harmful, I think it is good for me.

Paul is not sure where he wants to go, although a central office position would not be his first choice.

With amusement Paul reflects on the difficulty he had getting an administrative appointment. Although qualified and skilled according to typical indicators of administrative potential, Paul was not immediately chosen because he was seen as "uncontrollable and unpredictable," traits Paul sees as desirable rather

than negative. Although confident in his own ability, he was surprised to find that other principals considered him to be highly effective. He does not see himself as a typical administrator, or as part of the established group.

As evidenced both by comments from other principals and through conversation with Paul, it appears as though he is an administrator who values each person as an individual. The desk in his rather large office is pushed into the corner leaving the main area open for interaction with people. Paul usually turns his chair, and with his back to the desk and the management aspect of the school, relates and interacts with a variety of people. Traffic through his office is constant throughout the day.

Paul has a vision for children and education shaped by his background and variety of experiences. He has travelled extensively, looking at children and schools throughout the world:

> We travelled in Europe visiting most school systems. We visited schools in Greece, Yugoslavia, East Germany and so on. We also went to Singapore, Thailand and Australia. You get a different perspective and a realization when you come back that we really do have one of the best systems of schooling.

His view is for the whole child, focusing on individual needs with an eye for the future. Paul loves to talk about teaching and education which he encourages in others; not from a curriculum or management point of view but from a process orientation.

Paul is open and confident. Loyalty is a trait in which he prides himself and also expects and appreciates in others. To the students he says:

> We give our word and if you give your word, there isn't much more between us. What is more important, if you shake my hand and give me your word then that is it?

> The idea of loyalty between people is lacking anyway in our society. With the kids I dealt with in my grade 12 class there was an understanding. They could all call me by my first name only if they were willing to take care of me. They were friends, otherwise they weren't allowed to. It made a difference. Of course a lot of these kids (at Queen Street) don't want to take care of me.

Students -- Respected and Challenged

Paul fondly recalls a statement made by a new student to the school:

> I liked it when the girl stood up and said, "How come they like natives around here?" I mean really, what a compliment. What else do you want? That can make your whole year.

For Paul and his staff, the student are given first priority. Respect and concern for children and the community is evident in the school environment and through discussions with Paul. He is aware that, for these students at least, the school is of even more significance than for their more suburban, affluent counterparts. "It is a very complex business being in a school like this because kids don't see you as a cog, they see you as the whole wheel."

The impact of the school may not be as obvious. Despite the excellent programs and concern for the students,they remain at the 20th percentile on standardized tests. Paul was pleased to report, however, that for the first time the grade nine students scored above the city mean in Language Arts. For many the school may be the only consistent and caring place in their lives. Paul is concerned with keeping up the morale of the staff by pointing out their importance and significance in a child's life, despite limited academic progress.

Paul considers discipline as perhaps one of his strongest assets as an administrator. He willingly takes that responsibility from teachers and will gladly be the "mean one" around the school. He attempts to deal only with student

behavior, making an effort not to judge the person. Although the staff are able to discipline, it takes time and energy which Paul would rather see directed towards teaching and encouraging students. "I don't want them (teachers) to feel that it is a burden. It is really a tough job to have to hassle kids." One of Paul's first observations when he came to Queen Street School was the respect for children demonstrated by the teachers which was not reciprocated by the students.

> The teachers had a lot of respect for the kids in the first place, but the kids didn't have a lot of respect for the teachers. That was confusing to me but basically they never said, "No," and you have to say, "No." There was, to my way of thinking, too much of, "Oh well, you know where they come from."

Paul found it necessary to encourage the staff to raise their expectations for the students and demand the respect they were entitled to.

There are few formal rules in the school, and no records are kept of misdemeanors. Students are encouraged to accept responsibility for themselves and for each other. Paul would like to see the students empowered to take control of their own lives. He identified the things which students must learn in order to survive outside the school:

> First of all they don't know how to organize their time very well, and they don't know how to communicate effectively. They are very poor "crap" detectors, and we should teach children to be "crap" detectors; to cut the "bull." I mean most people can't do that either. And to make decisions about their lives; not their parents. We have to break the poverty cycle. We have to gain the sense of "I'm important, I can do it." We are getting it. We are getting kids, elementary kids, who will say, 'NO!" We had a kindergarten kid refuse to go home with her grandfather the other day because he drinks too much. She came in here and said. "I'm not going to go home with him." Great, that is a kindergarten child five years old. Marvellous! I said to the mother, "You should be really proud of your daughter." She couldn't quite understand what I was talking about, but she will give that some thought.

Paul makes an effort to get to know each child as an individual, trying to be aware of the daily battles they must face and what motivates them as individuals.

Children are referred to by name, and friendly banter and jokes are exchanged as principal and student meet. "I like your new hairdo Susan. Kathy, how is that new baby sister of yours? Great work on that math test Peter." If necessary he says, "Off to class John and Brian, the bell has rung." The students are all made to feel important and valued, and for many, it is the first time they have been held responsible and accountable.

> I think that most of my administrative allowance goes to hamburgers actually. I take kids to lunch, bribe them outright, just outright bribery. I take them for a hamburger if there is one week of no problems, for example. And boy, when that week is up there they are standing outside my office waiting to go for lunch. They change, they come to school. Incredible, over a stupid hamburger. I think that it is probably the first time that the children have been asked to make a commitment, you know seriously.

Paul and his staff are concerned about children beyond the classroom walls. They realize that in order to have any lasting effect they must have some impact on a child's home life. A native liaison worker has been hired to bridge the gap, both cultural and social, between the school and the homes of native children. Paul is very cautious not to judge the families in the community:

> I think that some of our parents are in desperate need of nurturing, of someone to take them by the hand. It is very difficult for them to take on things like coming into the school.

However, his anger appears when a child suffers, as in the case of a child whose mother "did not have time" to see that her child's medical needs were met.

> You feel like shaking them or just telling them to get out of your sight. That is when the thing breaks down for me all the time. I have a lot of compassion, but I don't have any compassion for that.

A tragic incident which occurred the day before one of my visits characterized the caring and the link between the child, the home and the school. A young native grade one student was killed in a home accident. The event had a profound effect on both the home and the school. The girl's teacher, a first year

teacher, along with the native liaison worker, visited the home sharing the grief with the family. Paul was pleased to see that many of the staff reached out and supported the young teacher, so unprepared for this event. The girl's father himself came to the school, obviously a trusted place, and was met by the principal. Paul recalled: "Yesterday the father stood in front of the door and was totally lost. He came in here, and we cried together." Later as Paul and the native liaison worker attempted to lend support they thought of the practical things. There was no talk of flowers and cards, which perhaps were not culturally or practically appropriate; instead, they suggested sending chairs over to the house to accommodate visitors and supplying paper plates, cups, and food. "Have they got any cigarettes?" asked Paul, "They could probably use some right now."

An Involved and Caring Staff

> My wife tells me that I choose staff that are very different from myself. That is very interesting. I wonder why I do that? They are really very gentle and kind.

Paul is generally confident where he stands with students; he knows how to motivate them and is aware of the effect he has on them. The picture is not so clear as he talks about his relationships with his staff. He speaks with a combination of respect, awe, wonder, concern and at times disappointment:

> I like elementary teachers in particular. To my way of thinking they are the most flexible and the most willing to look for change and look at things a little differently. . . . I really like their attitudes towards kids and towards living generally. They are not very reckless, but they are more and more willing to take a chance and change. As it turns out, these people really know how to deal with the kids. . . . There isn't a lot of loyalty amongst staff either with their administrators or the schools. Always this mentality of us against them, going home and bitching about what happened. Teaching isn't a very upbeat thing right now I don't think, and that is the other problem.

Paul knows that the most effective way to reach the students is through the staff. For this reason staff development has been one of his major concerns. The school spends a large portion of the budget on professional development; including several trips to England to visit progressive inner city schools. "We are spending a lot of money on professional development, a tremendous amount of money like $500 or $600 per person." Paul believes that the staff are well taken care of, something they perhaps will not recognize until they go to a new school .

He believes that the staff are of a very high calibre, especially considering that the school had previously been a "dumping ground" for teachers. He has found that over the past few years teachers who have been unable to accept the high demands have chosen to leave. He has on occasion had to "use the system" to get rid of weak teachers, an action for which he does not apologize. Queen Street is not a setting all teachers can cope with. One teacher, who Paul considers to be an excellent teacher, is leaving after one year because she is not comfortable in the setting.

Paul has a definite criteria for choosing new staff for which there is little opportunity since staff turn over is low.

> I have hired staff that are really very gentle, very kind with children. At the same time I want them to be able to stand up on their feet and say "No!". Be indignant. I have my favorites on staff. I think that that becomes apparent, I really have difficulty hiding that. I just like the way they are with children, they are so observant. I'm amazed at their total perspective of the classroom at all times even though these people usually have a lot of things going on in the classroom. They seem to know where every child is and what they are doing. I like a little confusion in the classroom and I don't think a classroom should really always be tightly under control. There should be sort of a relationship established between the teacher and the students where you can sense that there is this open communication and willingness to discuss, and change and to be flexible. I think these kids need this. That is where my preference is. Also they understand where I am coming from and that, of course, causes me to gravitate to them. . . . I am looking for people that are, first of all,

> genuinely interested in the children and not afraid of them. Curriculum expertise in many instances is a secondary requirement, as I am looking for someone who is willing to always go take that extra step with the child, and be positive with them.

Paul seeks a personal relationship with staff members which he is now learning is impossible with everyone. He realizes that he can deal with more discomfort in situations than others, particularly his staff, and he constantly reminds himself of this. He is aware that he leaves many teachers off balance and that he puts heavy demands on them. Paul commented on his relationship with the school staff:

> I wonder, I don't know what kind of relationship I really have with my staff. I would love to know. They say everything is fine and nobody really wants to leave, so I really don't know how they perceive me. It is important for me to know. I would like them to like me but I think one thing they do is respect me. I would like to personalize the relationships, and I am beginning to see that is almost impossible with everybody. I think that some teachers think that my expectations are too high and that I am constantly wanting more. I imagine, because I throw out a lot of ideas about how I think this school should be, they feel that they have to do those things so they are constantly feeling threatened or uneasy -- off balance. That is not really my intent. My intent would be to have a dialogue on all of these things and to discuss them.

He knows that some of the staff don't seem to understand him or appreciate what his philosophy is based on, but he does wish they would try harder.

> They don't know much about me. They don't know very much about the agonies that I've experienced in my life; the deaths and the losses and so on. They don't know anything about the fact that I grew up as a boy during the Second World War and saw people dying and friends being killed and having to pick up the bones the next day after the fire and try and sort them out. I don't feel like explaining to them but some people, like Jane, have started to understand and take me in the more complex terms that I think we should take people. We are slowly moving in that direction, probably about half the staff are beginning to understand.

A Holistic Approach to Inner-City Education

Paul has a holistic approach to education. He looks at where the child is and where the child is going, knowing that the boundaries of the school are larger that the classroom wall. "You have got to deal with these children in a realistic way," he pointed out, often speaking of the important role the school must play in the life of a child, particularly a child in the inner city. For many children the school is the central place, an aspect of their life that is consistent, and one area that can have an impact on their future.

If Paul has high expectations for the students and staff, he is even more demanding of those he sees in a serving capacity to the school and to the children. He will quickly call to task any individual or agency not fulfilling service to children. Paul is easily angered by those in support roles outside of the school who he feels are his equals, but have forgotten that their purpose is to provide for children.

> What it really comes down to is the needs of the children. I keep saying all the time, "What about the needs of the children?" and people automatically think that the children are taken care of when you have curriculum.

Paul's reputation precedes him, and a phone call from him often commands action, which both amuses and angers him:

> Well, I really consider those people to be in a serving capacity to the school. That is their responsibility, and if they screw up then they are going to hear about it. I am not going to waste time. I get the service that I want right away. If it is for the betterment of the kids the other things don't matter. They matter after, but not at the time. If I show some emotion with them they might just change and start to think a little bit about their jobs in a different way.

Paul's vision of the school as being the focal point in a inner city community is evident in an action plan now being developed at the school. A pilot project to be initiated in a few months time will see the coordination of services to

families and children channeled through the school. Paul hopes this will alleviate some of the fragmented services available. He explained the purpose:

> It has nothing to do with money or anything but it is a matter of getting all the agencies together to serve the kids even better, in a more meaningful way. When I visited the Kid's Place in Seattle the problem was that it was not school initiated; there is no focal point. If schools were the focal point, which they should be, all of the children would be served.

Paul believes that schools generally are good places for children. They are generally safe, secure and healthy places, particularly for inner city children. This is the case at Queen Street:

> You can see our children when you are walking around, I mean how open they are and how contented they are. This is a good place for them. Schools are positive places for children, people really care for them here.

Leadership and a Responsibility to Children

For Paul being an educational leader means thinking about children, talking about schools, and speaking out on important issues. He is frustrated with those in leadership positions who get bogged down in details, lose focus and neglect children. He is outspoken on this issue, which may contribute to his feeling of isolation from other principals in the system:

> Even with my colleagues I have real problems because they view their schools as being program oriented and end product oriented rather than saying, "How are these children going to grow, and how does that fit into their picture of their whole life?" I have been angry with them, as you know, for not standing up for what they believe. I don't feel that I have a great deal in common with the other people. When I talk to them they look at me like I am from the lunatic fringe.

Paul was very surprised to be nominated by other principals as an effective leader and had not nominated anyone himself. He is, however, encouraged by a new

principal in the inner city area who is beginning to speak out and make demands on behalf of students. Paul has encouraged and supported this principal.

Paul is somewhat disgruntled with the leadership shown at the upper levels of the school system for what he considers to be a lack of vision; of critical thinking. He is, however, quick to point out, that the school system is not overly rigid or tightly controlled because it allows a principal "like him" to be a a part of the system. Although he does not always agree with the leadership direction of some of the senior administrators he works for, he does respect them if they show a willingness to listen. Paul enjoys talking with others and respects those who will express an opinion. He may not always agree, but like his discipline policy with children, he is able to separate the action and the person, and to avoid judgement. The key to Paul's leadership philosophy is clear as he speaks of the relationship with his assistant principal:

> I want people around me. I want them to be out and up front and loyal, but I don't want them necessarily to agree with me. John is learning that quickly. Because that is the one thing that I will hold him responsible for, if he doesn't give me the feedback that I want. It is dishonest not to speak up, you owe it to the system to voice your opinions about it. You can make a better system. Not to be an anarchist, and many times people see me that way, you know a troublemaker. That is not my intent. My intent is to have my say, try to make some changes and get on with it. Not to waste time, life is too short.

. . . . .

In spite of believing otherwise, Paul's successes at Queen Street School have been recognized by a number of his peers. Comments that indicate he is caring and approachable are supported by his descriptions of the students and the school. His philosophy of education for inner-city children is indeed unique; as he

sees the school becoming a central force in the lives of these children. He is aggressive and he demands commitment from his teachers, but no more than he himself is willing to give. Thinking about children and schools is what he prefers to do, a practice he encourages in his staff.

CHAPTER VI

CHRISTINA SCOTT

Most of the four respondents who nominated Christina as an effective principal drew attention, either explicitly or implicitly, to her success in bringing about improvements in the school. An important aspect of the improvement process has been the increased involvement of staff and members of the community. The improvement has been guided by an emphasis on service to children. She works hard herself and seeks a similar commitment from staff and students. Yet, the demands she makes on others is tempered with a caring attitude and respect for teachers, members of the community and students.

A Teacher First

Christina Scott, principal of Silver Heights Elementary School, says she always knew what she wanted: "I'm sure I didn't want to be anything except a teacher. It was my goal from a very early age." A comparison of her experiences in the field of education, with her youthful appearance could lead one to conclude that she has always been a teacher. Because she began her teaching career at the age of eighteen, Christina has been able to accomplish much early in her life. "I've always taught," says Christina, "I've never taken time off; never did, never will and don't want to." While she was involved in education she and her husband were also raising their two children, now young adults.

Her goal was to have a B.Ed. degree by the time she was thirty, which she actually accomplished three years early. She was twenty-eight when she was

appointed to a principalship. Prior to that she had been a classroom teacher, consultant, program coordinator and assistant principal. Christina had been working on no specific career plan, and did not actively seek most of her administrative appointments. She has a Master's degree in Educational Administration and continues to take university courses.

Christina stayed at her first principal assignment for several years and then changed school jurisdictions in order to move to a rural setting with her family. In the new school district Christina first worked as a classroom teacher and then, following the retirement of the principal, she was asked to take the principalship of a rural school. Subsequent to a sabbatical to do graduate work, she was appointed to Silver Heights, her second principal designation with her current school board. At the time of the interviews she was completing her third year at the school.

Although the principal of a large elementary school, Christina still teaches part of the day. Twenty percent of her time is assigned to teaching duties. She chooses to organize her time in this way because "It would be really hard to take on full time administration." Even in her role as a school principal, Christina remains "ever the teacher." She is active in introducing new and effective techniques to her staff, she sees encouraging parent development as part of her responsibility, and she even offered suggestions and tips during the interviews about a future in school administration. The teacher in her just can't be suppressed!

Christina is not sure what her future in the field of education will be, but she knows she will make sure not to get into a rut. She does not see a position in central administration as one of her choices in the next few years.

Christina feels that she is able to handle the stress of being a school principal. She explained:

> I take my work home and analyze it. You know your computer never seems to stop but I have always felt that I have dealt with job stress really well because I don't let it take over. What I can do is leave my family behind and not bring problems to school. I have more of a tendency to take the job home than I do to bring the family to work. Maybe it is because our family has had fewer problems than most, and my husband has always been very supportive of my career.

Christina expressed pleasure in being nominated by her peers as an effective school principal:

> I guess you think you do a good job but we don't know what others think of us. This (nomination) is even more important because it is anonymous, and I find that people tend to say more negative things in those kinds of situations. I am really quite flattered actually.

She was particularly pleased by the comments that recognized her attention to children and their needs.

Achievement and Success at Silver Heights

Silver Heights School has about 350 students in grades one to grade six. It is located in quiet subdivision consisting primarily of single family homes. Young families tend to move into the community, and the school is a central focus both during the day and as a recreational area in the evenings . Silver Heights is a dual track school with one third of the students in the French Immersion program. The school also has a program for eight students with severe behavior disorders who come from throughout the school district.

There is a strong academic focus in the school. Students at Silver Heights consistently achieve in the top twenty percent in provincial testing and scored in the top five percent in mathematics one year. Christina emphasizes that the needs of all children, no matter what their abilities, are a concern of the staff.

Christina speaks very highly of the staff at Silver Heights. There are twenty-one teachers and several support staff. One teacher, who recently arrived from Quebec, speaks very little English but is finding a great deal of support and acceptance from the staff. Most important to Christina is that the staff are child-centered. Christina reported that:

> The teachers are great . . . just the normal, happy and hard working group. It would be very hard for things to get complacent because they are so keen. They really are a delight. There are a lot of creative people on this staff.

The parents of the children attending Silver Heights School are, for the most part, very involved in both their child's education and in the school. There is a strong Parent Advisory group involved in running the school lunch program, acting as volunteer assistants to teachers, and having input, but not control, of the the policies of the school. One of her mandates when she was assigned to the school was to improve school/community relations. In order to get a reading on parent opinion, Christina has implemented a series of opinionnaires on specific topics which are distributed to all parents when she believes there is a specific concern to them. Some of the topics have included: homework, school family concept, public relations, home and school, and school newsletters and calenders. She has found the opinionnaires to be very helpful both for getting feedback and as a way of keeping parents aware of school policies. The opinionnaire on homework, for example, started with an outline of the school philosophy on homework and concluded with a series of questions related to homework. Christina cautions parents that the results of the opinionnaires do not necessarily result in changes, but she assures parents that all suggestions are reviewed.

Christina's commitment to opening up the school to parents and her emphasis on community relations had immediate results. Two months into her first

term as school principal Christina received a standing ovation at the beginning of the first general assembly of parents. She was flattered but at the same time concerned about the reaction of some of the staff to such overwhelming support of her leadership style. She commented:

> From my point of view it [the ovation] was really quite nice but at the same time you wish it hadn't happened because I was still trying to establish myself in the school and this overwhelming support was really shocking to some.

Christina considers the school to be progressive and innovative. Silver Heights has a reputation to uphold; something of which both the staff and Christina are aware.

A Principal's Concern for Instructional Leadership

Christina see her role as principal of Silver Heights School as being "the student's advocate. . . . everything I do goes around that." She also believes that every principal must be an instructional leader. These are the two standards on which she operates as an educational leader. She always asks herself: "What can we do for this child? Is this the best program we can offer?"

Although Christina interacts with the children as much as possible, she realizes that the majority of interaction and learning takes place in the classroom with the teacher. She focuses on the quality of classroom instruction which she models, monitors, encourages and expects. Christina spends a great deal of her time observing teachers and students. She conducts both informal and formal classroom visits. Following the visit she sends a comment back to the teacher and the class saying, for example, "Thank you for letting me visit. I really enjoyed the. . . . " She makes an effort to have both the teachers and the students feel

comfortable with her presence. Knowing that teachers don't often get an opportunity to share with other teachers, Christina takes what she observes in classes and attempts to keep other staff members aware of exciting things happening in a particular class. She highlights some of her observations at regular staff meetings, gets teachers together when they can help each other, and provides opportunities for inter-class visitations. She does these things to both encourage the staff and to provide opportunities for professional growth.

Formal evaluation of teachers is an aspect of her job that demands a great deal of her time. She feels strongly that evaluation is necessary for growth and applauds the new evaluation policy of her board. She was surprised when she joined her current school board to find teachers so reluctant and threatened by evaluation because the former senior administrators of the district did not encourage evaluation by principals. She commented:

> There had been very few, if any, staff evaluations. We are now completing evaluations for people who had never been evaluated, and they have taught for fifteen years. It has certainly been a change in style for those people.

While she is convinced of the value of evaluation, Christina is at the same time aware of the stress and strain it puts on teachers:

> It is just so stressful and certainly many are defensive because there are certain defences that we all have. I do believe that the ones who have gone through it once are more positive the second time. For most it is an opportunity to be encouraged and told they are doing a good job.

Formal appraisals can be a simple process: one or two visits, a discussion between the principal and the teacher, and a written report. The process can also be drawn out and complex: many classroom visits, improvement plans, and several written reports. Christina has had to conduct both at Silver Heights, and her

satisfaction was evident whether she evaluated the master teacher or the marginal teacher:

> I saw one teacher last year twelve times before we decided that we had what we wanted. I went through the curriculum as well as suggested teaching strategies on such things as presenting a lesson and grouping. We wrote up an improvement plan, and at the end of twelve times we were able to write a good report. I was pleased with her progress and so was she.

Because of her diverse experience and her keen interest in curriculum, Christina is able to keep up with curriculum innovations, a practice she encourages in her staff. Staff members chose to be assigned as curriculum coordinators for each subject area. She has expectations that all teachers stay informed about curriculum changes and development, assisted by these coordinators.

The management aspect of running a school, although not neglected, is not one of her main areas of interest, nor does it provide particular satisfaction. Christina's preference is to be with people -- to talk, ask questions, observe, model and make suggestions. At one time she thought of changing her style in order to use her time more effectively. Her attempt to designate certain hours of her day to deal with the paper work in her office was not successful because she could not turn the teachers, students and parents away from her door. The practice did not suit her style because she felt that she couldn't run a school effectively from the office. Christina has compromised by opening the curtains of the windows covering most of the walls in her large office. This allows her to observe the school environment even when she is working in the office.

Listen, Clarify, Interact, Plan, Follow-up

As Christina described several instances where she had to deal with conflict, her approach to conflict becomes clear. She chooses to listen, clarify, interact, develop strategies and follow-up. Where the conflict involves others, she brings the parties together, accentuates the positive in the individuals involved, and for the most part allows and expects the participants to seek solutions to the problems. In seeking and offering solutions, Christina keeps her focus on the well being of the children, whether directly involved or affected by the situation.

In her first school as principal Christina was concerned with two staff members who had met a complete impasse over a remedial program for the students. Her approach was simple yet effective. She described the situation and what she said as she remembered it:

> You are having difficulties here. I have a couple of ideas but I also have another meeting at ten. We have a half an hour to talk and when I go to my meeting you can decide what you want to do about it. Paul, we appreciate your services here. You are doing some great things with the kids and the kids need the service. Betty, the same goes for you. You are a valued staff member, you do great things with the kids and we appreciate your service here. . . . I see three choices. First, I can solve the problem for you; second I can talk to Personnel and bring in some supervisors because this has gone on far too long. My third choice is to let you two find a solution. I prefer the third approach so I'll let you see what you decide while I'm at my meeting.

A working solution was achieved and Christina was thrilled with the solution that quickly solved an ongoing battle. The situation did not escalate nor was there a loser in the final outcome.

Student conflict is managed in much the same way, illustrated by a situation involving a group of grade six boys menacing one other student:

> I talked to the boys individually and then brought all the boys in and did a little role play with them. I phoned their mothers, always telling the truth, "I really enjoy your son, he is just a great kid. I

> really rely on him in assemblies but unfortunately he has been involved in something that he is sorry about now. I wanted to let you know. I think he needs to talk about it. I don't want any more punishment here, I just want them to realize what has happened."

The boys were all told to come back with a plan, which they did. All had things they were going to do to make the other boy's life more pleasant at school. Christina was pleased with the outcome to what was a fairly minor problem, but one which could have escalated to the point where a solution is very difficult.

> I was thrilled. They were 300% different from what they had been. The boy's mother came in and thanked me saying that it was the most wonderful thing that had ever happened to him. Things are still working well. He doesn't have a lot of friends but his life here is happy, and he is now recognized for his strengths.

With teachers and with students, Christina allows participants to choose their own solutions to problems, ensuring that all participants maintain their dignity. Outcomes that allow all parties an opportunity to win are sought. Dealing with adults in conflict is often like dealing with a grade one student stealing; a common occurrence. She may say to the child, "Well I guess you were playing with this toy and then you put it in your desk. Let's put in back where it belongs." In a similar way an adult may be allowed to say, "That may be what you thought I said, but what I actually meant was . . . ." Christina says that, "Everyone has the option of choices and everybody makes mistakes. We must consider that everyone has the right to be allowed their dignity and avoid assigning blame."

Conflict between parents and teachers is often difficult because, as Christina said, "Usually by the time I get to them they've escalated it to the point where they are not talking." Christina makes a practice of listening to both parties and then bringing the teachers and the parents together once the anger has been diffused. She makes it a point to keep the focus on the child and his or her needs. She keeps notes during the meetings, acts as a mediator, and ensures that a plan is in place

before the meeting ends. After a period of time has passed Christina follows up with the teacher, parents, and students, asking how things are going. She finds that once a plan is in place the solution is really quite simple.

Christina tries to anticipate potential conflict situations and deal with them before they escalate. When the program for the behavior disordered students was being planned for Silver Heights School, an article appeared in the local paper resulting in some serious parental concerns. Her public relations work and the rally of support from the school staff resulted in the same paper publishing a most complimentary follow-up article several months later. Christina was pleased to report that once the program was established and running:

> One of the students and his parents, along with staff from the school, did a four part presentation to the School Board. The board was very supportive of the program and impressed with the parent and student and their perceptions of the benefits of the program.

For the most part, Christina expresses satisfaction with resolved conflict, realizing that it is part of the territory, fully expecting that conflict resolution is possible if the people involved are willing to seek solutions. Generally, her experiences have been positive.

Establishing An Educational Philosophy

As Christina talked about her job as principal, it became obvious that children are her first concern whether she is planning, evaluating teachers, establishing policy, resolving conflict or promoting the school. She is an advocate for children; even though she is now the principal, she still sees herself as a teacher. The needs of the children are the basis for everything she does as a principal.

Predictably, she chooses teachers who are child-centered, which she says describes the teachers now at Silver Heights School. A lack of attention to children was one of her concerns with some of the staff in the first year at the school. Many of the practices and policies in operation clearly violated her philosophy. "No way," she said "was this school going to be run for the teachers. The school is here for the children." Christina believes that by opening up the school and involving the parents, the children are also being served. Part of working with children is working with parents.

Her experiences during the first year of her principalship at Silver Heights School were not all positive. The stress was evident, even two years later, as she talked about that first year. The transition from the former principal to Christina was not accepted by a core group of individuals. When Christina attempted to open up communication between the school and the community, as was her mandate, this group closed ranks. Her emphasis on evaluation, no matter how positive she tried to be, perhaps also contributed in some way to the strained staff relations she experienced during the first few months at Silver Heights School. The standing ovation from the parents Christina received early in the year, probably only added fuel to the fire. Christina attempted to be open and direct with those involved but resolution seemed impossible. She was, however, determined to see the year through and joked that "I decided that even if I won the lottery I was going to finish [the year] because it was just too important to let go." She was supported fully by the central office personnel, the majority of the school staff, parents and students. The situation deteriorated to the point that staff members were asked, upon her recommendation, to leave the school. She does not feel any sense of victory with

the situation but could at the time see no alternative if the school was to operate in an effective manner.

Christina's philosophy of good teaching and effective classroom management, was somewhat different from what had been previously expected in the school:

> When I came here the things that were considered the best teaching methods involved no talking, no interaction, no movement, very quiet classrooms with no learning centers. My idea of a learning environment is a lot of peer interaction, group interaction, peer teaching and sharing, changing around, and learning centers that develop independence.

The difference in philosophies caused some initial concern at the beginning. Using her positive approach, Christina encouraged and reinforced what she liked in the classroom and modeled the teaching principles in which she believes. Deliberately she initiated the changes in practices that she felt were violating her philosophy of the child-centered school.

Silver Heights School operates as a "Family School," a term Christina introduced. The concept is based in a philosophy which she operated under in three previous schools. In her first year at Silver Heights the staff modified the philosophy to suit the needs of the community and the children. She clarified:

> We try to build a philosophy that will include everybody in the school as a school family. This includes teachers, students, parents, support staff, extra helpers, the community and the central office. We develop responsibilities and rights for each individual family group and print all of this in our school handbook. It has been with me for three year. When I brought it here we sat down as a staff and went through the basic philosophy, modifying and expanding as we saw needs. We do this every year.

. . . . .

As was mentioned by those nominating Christina, school improvements, including improving home/school relations, marks her success at Silver Heights. Changes did not occur easily nor without considerable strain on relationships in the school. Christina does, focus on children, on their development and happiness while at school, with particular attention to the needs of individuals. That she cares about people, as indicated by respondents, is clear when she talks about parents, teachers and students. Boundless energy seems to characterize Christina as she works to accomplished her goals.

CHAPTER VII

STEPHEN KING

According to some of the four individuals who nominated him, Stephen's major contribution to making a good school even better is his ability to define high but realistic expectations which enhances the learning environments in the school. The favorable climate is associated with Stephen's ability to work with people, and to include both teachers and members of the community in enhancing student learning. He supports individual initiatives and risk taking. The effects of his leadership are reflected in the achievements of the students, in the views of some nominators.

Portland Junior High School -- Active and Dynamic

Portland Junior High School is just outside a large suburban area. The school receives many of the graduates of Christina Scott's elementary school who are for the most part from middle class families living either on acreages or in the residential areas of the school jurisdiction. The school stands alone, surrounded not by homes and commercial buildings, but by freeway and agricultural land. Portland Junior High School -- a large, irregular shaped complex and the oldest school in the district -- has grown in stages; wings and facilities were added as needs demanded. The large school, extensive parking lot, and expansive playing fields reveal nothing of the dynamic activity within the walls of the school. During most of the day a passerby would observe little human activity save for the occasional outdoor physical education class and, of course, the convoy of school

buses and staff cars arriving and departing daily. Of the buses, the Portland Junior High School principal explained:

> All of the students are bused here which has some distinct advantages which the parents also mention. They know their kids are at school and not at a mall .... We say that the students are not to walk to school or walk home, although there might be the odd straggler.

Approximately thirty-five teachers, three administrators, eight support staff, and 600 students arrive at Portland Junior High School each morning. One narrow road facilitates the arrival of cars and buses, and all of the occupants enter the school through one door. Students and staff disperse themselves around the school as Portland Junior High comes to life.

The school offers a wide range of programs in addition to the regular junior high curriculum. Special programs meet the needs of students with minor learning problems; in addition, there is special class placement available for those with more serious developmental delays. There is also a special program for thirty-five students considered to be gifted. Stephen described the school as an active place which is very strong on extra-curricula activities. A glance at a brochure outlining school accomplishments reveals a strong athletic focus as well as an emphasis on fine arts, academic achievement, community involvement and special needs programming.

Because all of the students are at school all day, Stephen pointed out the need to keep them active and involved during the noon hour. No students go home, and there are no other distractions such as a shopping mall or fast food outlet. Although this puts extra pressure on the school staff, there are some advantages, as Stephen explained:

> The noon hour is hectic when you have 600 students. There are limited things that can happen in the gymnasium so there are always

> a number of things going on. We have an understanding with the kids that they basically have the freedom of the school and the grounds at lunch but they are not to leave the grounds. As long as they behave we don't run around with a club saying, "Don't do that."

Stephen and his staff consider a number of factors when they plan for the lunch break. They know that the kids need to "let off steam," to release energy and get away from the pressure and structure of school. The staff are also sensitive and appreciate that this is the only time many of the students have the opportunity to socialize and be with their friends. Many extra-curricula activities are planned for the lunch hour, not all of which involve athletics. Students are given considerable freedom to choose what they are going to do, but this freedom comes with a certain amount of responsibility. Stephen explained:

> Sometimes we have to send them outside if they get rowdy, or we may restrict the activities of a few, but generally the philosophy is that it is a time for them to "let off steam." We then expect them to behave in class and basically they do.

There have been very few problems, and vandalism has been low.

The extensive extra-curricula programming for students requires a considerable amount of involvement on the part of the teachers at Portland Junior High School. The amount of time involved is clearly shown in this statement from a brochure describing the school:

> All thirty-five staff members and many classified staff are involved to varying degrees in offering forty-five different extra or co-curricula programs to the students at Portland Junior High. The average staff member spends ninety hours per year on extra-curricula activities. Some spend considerably more.

Stephen is proud of this aspect of his school. He believes that because the students and the teachers spend a large part of their day in the building the atmosphere and tone are vital to a successful school environment.

The students are developing leadership abilities as a result of much of what happens at Portland Junior High School. A student run conflict management program and peer counselling services help to develop some of this leadership as well as reduce some of the pressures on administrators and teachers to solve student issues. Stephen has had the opportunity to observe many of the graduates of Portland when they reach the senior high school, and he is pleased with their visibility and involvement in the school. He explained:

> They are outgoing and involved in the school. They talk about their teachers and their school in a positive way. I go over to the high school several times a year, and they are right up there front and center. They are as big and boisterous as they were in junior high. Many of them are the leaders of that school now.

A recent picture in the local newspaper, showing the eight members of the high school, contains seven Portland graduates!

Several parent groups are actively involved in the school. Parents are generally involved with the very successful Portland Track Club and the music program, as well as in approving resources to be used in the sexuality component of the health program. Three hundred parents recently attended a meeting to discuss the future of the school. The future of Portland was in question as the school board considered several options including renovating and modernizing the facility or building a new school within the residential area of the school jurisdiction. While Stephen admitted to a preference for keeping and upgrading the school, he was excited about the prospect of planning a new school. He was pleased with the interest and support expressed by the parents.

Teacher, Coach and Principal

Upon entering Portland Junior High School, a visitor is immediately struck by a sense of order, purpose and commitment. In the halls students trophies are prominently displayed, art work is visible, posters announcing coming events abound, students in the halls appear to be "on their way" and the voices from the classes (both student and teacher) are peaceful and dynamic.

The school office, too, is a busy place. Secretaries involved in different activities reflect a relaxed but determined state; the constant traffic in and out of the office is orderly. Upon arrival for the first interview the secretary expressed slight surprise that Mr. King was not immediately available, "He knows you're coming," she said, " I'm sure he'll be along right away."

If first impressions indicate anything, Stephen King demonstrates the mood of the school -- relaxed, confident and committed. After a brief apology for keeping me waiting (two minutes), and an offer of coffee, I was invited into a very large and comfortably organized office. The office door was closed, and our interview began with Stephen offering his full attention. During our three interviews we were interrupted only once with a question that had to be answered. Staff members seemed to know that questions should wait, and I was left with the impression that Stephen is able to focus his attention on whatever administrative task he is involved in.

Stephen has been at Portland Junior High for two years. Previous to this assignment he had been principal at another junior high for three and a half years, and assistant principal at the same school for one year. His first experiences as a educator were in teaching French, his area of speciality, in another school district. Although administrative positions were not necessarily what he had in mind at the

beginning of his career, he eventually set this as his goal. When the principalship at Portland became available Stephen applied because the school had a reputation for having an active, involved staff. Stephen felt that this situation would mesh with his philosophy of what schools should be like. He repeatedly emphasized that Portland's good reputation was largely due to what went on before his arrival. He considers the previous principal to have been excellent, although he was in ill health and probably not as effective during the last few years.

Stephen indicated that although the staff of his previous school was of excellent calibre, their philosophy about the school's mission was somewhat contrary to his beliefs. He explained:

> At the other school the staff was really good but they were very academic orientated. They were just for the basics, and very few of them were willing to do some of the extra things. Many of the staff had been there for several years so it was difficult to make inroads. . . . so I was looking forward to coming here.

His preference is to work with some of what he terms the "renegades" and "free spirits" that teach at Portland. He said:

> There are a lot of free spirits here. Some of them are renegades. The people here are willing to speak their minds but I think that is healthy. There are so many strong people, caring people that it is hard not to stay on top of things . . . . In this school the teaching population is aging as at any other school but what has not happened is retrenchment. There is still enthusiasm and involvement.

Stephen teaches part of the time as do the two assistant principals. He estimates that 15% of his time is spent in classroom instruction, primarily French classes. He explained why this was so important to him as an administrator:

> I think it is important to do some of the teaching in a school. It is important for the principal to do some of the "work" in a school; what the teachers consider to be some of the work anyway. They don't always have an appreciation for what we do.

He also coaches and referees several sports as part of his extra-curricular work.

Stephen speaks of two principals who acted as models and examples for him as educational leaders. He explained how the two diametrically opposite styles had an effect on him:

> My first principal was really bad, he did everything wrong. He would have been a good case study for a university class. From him I learned what not to do.
>
> When I first came to this school district I worked with Tom Smith, which was a really good experience. He is considered to be one of the top principals in the area, and I learned much from him.

The respect Stephen has for his staff is evident as he talks about their commitment and dedication. He is pleased that they question and challenge, and he is impressed that although they are an aging staff, similar to most schools, they are not unwilling to investigate new ideas and approaches. The staff have remained vital and involved. Because he and many of his staff members are similar in age and social circumstances to the parents of the Portland students, Stephen believes they are able to relate well. Stephen himself has children of junior high age, and he feels he knows the community.

As he talked of any future career changes Stephen indicates that a central administrative position is not in the immediate plans, although he does not rule out the possibility for later. "To be quite honest," he said, "I would rather be in the position that I am in now. I love working at the school level." He has considered the option of leaving administration altogether and returning full time to the classroom. His reasons are perhaps similar to those of many other school principals:

> I would say that I have been thinking more in the last year about leaving (administration). Not that there aren't rewards, I just question the worth. The size of the pay cheque is one thing, as well as the number of hours and the time away from family. There are also certain health costs to consider.

"I get over the feeling quickly," he said, perhaps indicating that the chance of leaving the principalship is not so much a possibility as an option which helps him cope, knowing he is not locked in. He admits to being able to handle stress quite well. He keeps regular school hours of eight to five, and he attempts to start each day with a run. An added bonus is his ability to leave the school behind each day as he explained:

> I am usually able to get over the frustrations pretty easily. I can shut down pretty well on the weekends, during summer holidays and at spring break. I have pretty good bio-readings so I know what is going on with myself.

Stephen's biggest area of concern -- perhaps the area that most makes him question the length of time he will remain a principal -- is the increase in the influence from outside the school which includes the shifting of the power base and the erosion of school autonomy. Stephen's comments on this will be highlighted later.

The Best Junior High Possible

Stephen challenges the staff and students at the school to attempt to be "The Best Junior High Possible." In many cases the challenge is self- initiated, and in many ways the goal has been met -- Portland Junior High has an excellent reputation in the community. Although Stephen prefers not to take credit for the success of the school he believes he has helped the staff articulate the strengths, identify the school's current status, and project the future of the school. During several brain-storming sessions the staff identified what they considered, given ideal circumstances, to be the characteristics of the best junior high school. They also identified the characteristics of the best school administrator and the best junior

high teacher. They refined the lists, identified ten categories, and described the specifics. These lists serve as a guide, an ideal, something to strive for. For the staff at Portland being good is not satisfactory; they want to be the best.

Academic success is an obvious measure of school success, but Stephen stresses it should not be the only criterion. He is pleased that the staff, to a greater degree than those in his previous school, are concerned about the atmosphere and climate of the school. He explained:

> For junior high kids of varying abilities and backgrounds the climate is the number one factor in their achievement. I believe that kids spend a good portion of their life in this school as do the teachers. It should be a place that is not drudgery. It is important that it be a good place to be.

Stephen knows that the environment affects the teachers as well as the students. He talk about one vital and successful extra-curricular program that died out with the departure of the two teachers coordinating the activity. The school could not support the program without the teachers and, interestingly, a similar activity has not developed in the school where the teachers are currently teaching. Paul explained:

> It is not always a matter of direct transfer of someone's expertise that they will be able to pick up where they go to. I think it is the school that causes some things to happen with people, at least I believe that is the case with this school.

Motivating teachers has generally not been something Stephen has had to deal with at Portland. "They put pressure on each other," he said, "There is no room for complacent people on this staff because they always encourage and support each other." Stephen explained that although he is personally challenged by the more outgoing members of the Portland teaching force there is room for all kinds of personalities. He seeks input from the more quiet staff members not as likely to speak out at a staff meetings, but nevertheless having a great deal to contribute.

For the most part reaction from parents and students has been positive. Stephen demonstrates a confidence in the school's position in the community, aware that Portland is seen as a good school -- one which is on the move, questioning and improving a school where parents are comfortable sending their children. Stephen is seldom approached on parent meeting nights with anything but favorable comments, and he awaits the results of a district survey of parents expecting no surprises. Although he is interested in what they will say, he does not expect any great dissatisfaction.

The teachers at Portland do not deal with the lack of community complaints in a cavalier manner. Not willing to sit back and relax, they continue to question and where needed make changes. Stephen explained that the staff members of the school are currently looking at the programs offered to special needs students:

> We are working on a network for students who have, or who are in difficulty. There are several teachers and administrators involved in a number of programs, and we have some overlap and some gaps and we want to come up with a way to make sure we catch everyone.

A Philosophy -- More than a Page from a Textbook

During the first interview, Stephen was quick to point out that he wasn't interested in talking "effective schools" or textbook philosophies. Forced to define his philosophy of school administration, an exercise he participated in at an administrators workshop, Stephen outlined: Model Patience, Positive, Care, Share and 50% Visible. This, posted by his desk, helps to keep him "on track" and to remember to do the work he should be doing. Of this philosophy he said:

> I guess that although I was in a way forced to describe my philosophy three years ago, it still stands today. I look at it and ask

> myself if I am working too much and not delegating enough, or if we are celebrating enough around the school.

Aware that a philosophy cannot be imposed or mandated, Stephen is careful not to do that with his staff. He knows that given the type of teachers in the school, walking into à staff meeting with an agenda item of vision or high expectations would be greeted with either laughter or anger. His approach is much more subtle and less imposing.

Stephen is most concerned with the people who daily spend many hours at Portland Junior High School. He stressed that "Relationships should always be more important than rules." He attempts to encourage and support teachers and students, highlighting accomplishments and successes of both. "There are definitely a lot of positives for doing well in this school," Stephen explained, "the incentives are much greater than the punishments." He attempts to reward teachers as well as students, although the range of commendations available to a principal is minimal. He does, however, use what budget leeway he has to encourage staff initiatives in program development. Stephen described his approach in one particular situation:

> I look for good things that are happening in the classroom and give support through the budget. You have a lot of power when your hands are on the purse strings. One area that I have really worked hard on is the health program . I have tried to be there with the teachers at all of the meetings with the parents and I have provided a coordinator for that area.

Stephen's approach upon taking over the principalship at Portland illustrates his philosophy of educational leadership. Knowing he was coming to a good school, a school that suited his style, his initial approach was to do three things. First, he did a great deal of observing and listening. He then set out to define and consolidate school operations and gave the school a clear administrative focus. Before initiating any changes, Stephen talked to staff and students, spending a great

deal of time in classrooms and hallways, becoming familiar with all aspects of the school. He next helped the staff see what he had observed and initiated a process of articulation and consolidation. He explained:

> There were a lot of things happening here that I considered to be good but no one was able to describe what was taking place, no thought had been given to what was happening specifically or generally in the school. I saw that as part of my job, to consolidate and give the school a framework. . . . I think now we have a pretty good idea of what this place is about. We have defined it in several ways.

Stephen's undertaking of creating an administrative focus was perhaps crucial to his establishing himself in a school that was already running well. He believes that it is important, given the size of the school and that there are three administrators, that he be that focus. His intention, he stressed, was not to introduce a bureaucratic model or to become an authority figure, rather he saw it as a way of accepting ultimate responsibility for the operations of the school. Taking on this responsibility he knows implies two things: knowledge of what is happening in this school and an understanding of what should be happening in schools.

Stephen wants all staff members to be the best that they can be, which can mean stepping aside and allowing new ideas to blossom or spending time helping and coaching a teacher who is experiencing difficulty. He sees staff evaluation as a necessary aspect of school administration but he is hesitant to use it as a means for staff development.

Decision Making for Administrative Effectiveness

Close attention to Stephen Kings's decision making process reveals a great deal about his leadership style and philosophy. His statement that "Decisions

should be made closest to where they are to be carried out," points out his approach. Stephen allows others to make decisions in his school and he expects central office to allow him to make the necessary decisions to run the school properly.

One of his first objectives upon arriving at Portland, as mentioned earlier, was to establish himself as the administrative focus. He is careful to point out that his intentions are to create a system where decisions are channeled through him, not necessarily made by him. He emphasizes that the change was brought about gradually and situationally. An example involves the school banking system where previously many different groups within the school managed different bank accounts for various activities such as sports, bands and clubs. Rather than dictate a change Stephen offered a more efficient method, one that allowed him to monitor money as well as simplify the matter for the teachers involved. "I made it easier for them to deal with money collected," he explained, "Now they are more likely to do it."

Stephen does not feel a need to approve of everything that happens in the school, but he does expect to be kept informed. To this he said:

> I do really believe that a principal has to know and have a grip on what is going on in pretty well all aspects of the school. Although you leave the work to them you have to stay informed. You can, however, destroy everything by having everything needing approval with forms filled out.

He accepts much of the responsibility for knowing what is happening by taking an active part in the daily operations of the school, keeping a visible profile, and talking to students and staff.

Dialogue with staff members is a vital aspect of Stephen's approach to decision making. Prior to bringing up an issue at a staff meeting, he will discuss

the matter with several key people as well as those less likely to comment in the larger group. Stephen knows the staff expect this and, although it is somewhat time consuming, he considers it to be a healthy practice. He knows that there is often a lot of selling to be done when presenting new ideas and that issues need to be thought through prior to presenting them to staff. He commented:

> You find yourself talking to people a lot in advance of doing something. As the textbooks say, check it out with some key people. Here I'm forced into this situation anyway, but I do think it's good to also see what the more low-key people have to say.

There have been occasions when Stephen had plans to initiate some change but chose instead to delay action until a staff member began the process. When this happens he nurtures and encourages the change.

Although Stephen does not describe himself as a risk taker he admires this style in others. He has little difficulty in encouraging an idea presented by a staff member even if he is not totally confident of success. He talked about an occasion concerning a group of teachers planning a major trip for some students. Although he felt that there had not been enough preparation in order to be organized in time, he allowed the teachers to proceed to the point where they themselves were able to recognize the impossible situation. Of this Stephen points out that:

> It didn't go as they had planned but at least they had the opportunity to try it. My guess had been that it would not have worked but I didn't tell them that because I didn't want to discourage them. In the end nobody was hurt.

Stephen continues to voice his concern that the autonomy of school power and authority is eroding. He is seeing this happen on two fronts: more and more decisions are being imposed by central office, and there is a strong push to make parent advisory groups more powerful. He finds both trends somewhat disturbing.

Although Stephen describes himself as a calm school principal, he admitted to having a different approach when dealing with some central office staff.

> I've been described as enthusiastic but sometimes enthusiasm is called over-bearing or coming-on-too-strong. Sometimes that is the way some central office people may be thinking of me. . . . I find that it is much more effective to get a little bit loud than it is to just quietly state your case. Often quietly stated cases just get pushed aside.

Stephen is adamant that the school be the decision-making unit and that policy generated by central office is often counter productive. Stephen is not afraid to argue and defend this position at principal's meetings but he is careful to point out that he is not an anarchist; however he is committed to opposing top down decision making. "Professionally" is how he said he deals with decisions that he disagrees with, willing to carry out board policy confident that he did voice his opinion and resist at the appropriate time.

Stephen is comfortable with his relationship with the parents of the students of Portland Junior High. They are involved in a number of groups and for the most part support the school. He is willing to discuss any matter with parents and welcomes their individual input. He is concerned, however, with the trend toward groups of parents having more decision making powers, because:

> Schools serve all students, not just the ones whose parents may sit on a committee. We don't really know whose interests are being served by parent advisory groups with a lot to decision making authority. We have school boards, they can give lawful orders. I have no problem with that; they are elected to represent all of the people.

Stephen's case was made clear this year with a small group of parents concerned about the content and resources used in the provincially mandated sexuality component of the health curriculum. In spite of general acceptance and approval from other parents, this group went to great lengths to demand changes.

Not content with exercising their option of exempting their children from the classes in question, these parents persisted even using the local paper as a forum. Stephen was pleased to report that in spite of great pressure he was able to resist change and follow the decision of the majority. He spoke respectfully of the group involved but was confident in his decision and pleased with the solid support shown by both the staff and other parents.

The constant monitoring however, does tend to weigh Stephen down as he runs his school. In spite of an accumulated 63 years of experience between him and his two assistant principals, he feels somewhat insulted to be constantly monitored and pressured as if those outside the school could somehow make better educational decisions. Given the level of commitment and enthusiasm of the Portland staff, Stephen's frustrations are understandable. Will he stay on as principal? "I think I probably will," he sighed, "I go through these things once in awhile."

. . . . .

School climate is a priority for Stephen just as those nominating him had suggested. Although Stephen described how he established himself as the leader of Portland Junior High, his willingness to allow others to take the initiative is clearly apparent in his description of his leadership practices. Stephen's relationship with the community is also an aspect of his leadership which has contributed to his success and recognition.

CHAPTER VIII

TERRY ROBERTS

The characteristics of Terry which have earned him the image of an effective principal are varied. He is perceived as having a clearly articulated vision of education grounded in a concern for children. The school climate is described as "strong," suggesting that there are standards and guidelines. He is committed to both the school staff and to the programs. Some of his six nominators perceive him as being outspoken but pleasantly assertive with excellent communication skills. He is well organized and is regarded favorably as a principal by both staff and students.

Principal, Erin Heights School

Terry Roberts of Erin Heights Elementary Junior High School immediately strikes a visitor as being calm, relaxed and confident. Striding into his office from participating in athletic activities with students, Terry quickly undertook the task at hand -- talking about his school.

Erin Heights, a sprawling complex on a large treed section of property in an older district, is not a new school; it opened in 1925 although portions have been added over the years. The school has a pleasant, almost cottage look, with well kept lawns, shrubs and trees. The students are polite and friendly, offering greetings and directions to the office when approached by visitors to the school.

Two hundred and sixty children attend Erin Heights school--115 in the elementary program and 145 in the junior high. The students are drawn from

throughout the city, and as Terry said, "Difficult to describe because they come from a variety of backgrounds." The elementary children, who nearly all live in the area, can be portrayed as coming from an almost inner-city environment, while the junior high students, who tend to travel from other parts of the city, are from a higher socio-economic environment. Student enrollment is a constant concern for Terry as there is "always a question of closure" for Erin Heights School.

In addition to offering the regular elementary and junior high programs, including French instruction to students in grades three to nine, four new programs have been initiated by Terry. These include a program for students with severe behavior disorders, one of the first in the city; a primary and intermediate program for students with learning delays; and Kindergarten, surprisingly the first at Erin Heights. Terry also discouraged the practice of many students coming to Erin Heights for grade seven and then leaving to complete their junior high elsewhere. "We offer a complete program here," said Terry, "we want people to stay." He reported that ninety percent of the students now stay and complete grade nine at the school.

The teaching staff who Terry described as being "just excellent--a good mix of personalities," is made up of ten support and twenty professional staff, including Terry and an assistant principal. Both Terry and his assistant teach classes: forty-five and thirty percent, respectively. As Terry indicated this is by choice: "I love to teach and I look foreword to my time in class." There is very little staff turn over and always a number of people in line for any new position that comes available.

Terry, in his fifth year as principal of Erin Heights School, did not set out to be a school principal, or even a teacher. He knew he did not want to be a "paper pusher" and had always looked in the area of athletics and sports for a career. An

athletic injury early in his university years forced him to pursue other areas and led to a degree in Education. His initiation to teaching was, as he described, "unique."

As a young, single and athletic new teacher he was assigned to Paul Hill School, a large inner city school that had a very high staff turn over. In addition to Terry, perhaps half of the teachers were in their first year. "We took the school over," remembered Terry, "We just loved it." Describing that first year he said:

> The kids had just been waiting for a group of people to come in and take an interest in them. It was just a fantastic year. The socialization with the kids and the teachers was very important to me then. I moved a block and a half from the school and spent all my time there . . . I was teaching physical education and because kids tend to like P.E. I had no problems with the kids. It was a great introduction to teaching . . . We had a lot of power for first year teachers.

While at Paul Hill School, Terry also received his introduction to administration. He described how it happened:

> After a couple of years one of the assistant principals left and I ended up in charge of the junior high programs. I was too young and I didn't want it (the responsibility) to be quite honest; it just sort of happened . . . but I did end up liking it.

Terry stayed at Paul Hill School for five years and has been an assistant principal at two other schools since. Under three principals he has received a variety of experiences which have contributed to his preparation for becoming a principal. Feeling that his "apprenticeship was up" he applied for and received the principalship of Erin Heights School.

Establishing a Climate of Trust and Cohesiveness

Terry explained that he was assigned to Erin Heights School in order to renew an older school with continually declining enrollment. His first impression was of a school that had a long existence but had "no history, no traditions." He,

along with the assistant principal who was also new to the school, began to implement a plan to renew the school and introduce some traditions and identity. Terry explained how they began:

> The building was stark, it was a cold place, at least that was my impression. We spent a lot of time the first couple of weeks in August discussing how we were going to introduce some traditions and culture into the school . . . eventually we started using the word family . . . it became our motto: "We are Family."

Terry's style of leadership is subtle and loosely structured. He is a calm individual and as he stressed, "Not on a power trip." He believes that in order to lead others, particularly teachers, it is critical that he establish credibility with them. He sees teaching classes as one way of doing this. It is also important to support staff and encourage their initiatives. Vision, or more accurately refining that vision, is an important aspect of leadership according to Terry. A slogan, posted on his office wall encourages "Revisioning Your Vision." "Your vision for education must be based on your school," he said, "everyone may not always be on the same train but it's important to let your staff know where you are going and to take them with you."

Being a principal is not a lonely or isolated experience for Terry, a statement which surprised a principal from another school district visiting Erin Heights: "He said that he thought administration was very lonely and was surprised that I did not agree. In his situation he has no contact with other principals." Terry attended schools in the district for all of his own schooling, and all of his teaching and administration experience has been in the district. "I know everyone and they all know me," he said. He is involved with a rather unique group of eight principals who meet regularly for informal breakfast meetings. Terry described the group:

> At seven o'clock in the morning we meet. There is no formal agenda, very often there is something we want to discuss but we

> don't set it up in a formal way. We are simply a group of administrators that get along together, and we share our frustrations and joys.

A network is also established so they can call on one another for help or advice. The group allows the members to support and encourage each other. It also provides a forum to complain in comfort and security. Membership is not closed, although they are aware that if they get too large the spontaneity and informality they enjoy would fall to planning and structure. They have recently invited a new principal who is in a very difficult situation to join the group because they feel that their experience and support will be helpful.

Terry expressed a great deal of trust in the district leadership. He believes that generally there is support and respect from above although he is not naive enough to believe that all principals in the district would agree. "I think people will argue that -- I don't think every administrator in the district feels that closeness, that bond and communication. But I think that generally most administrators do." He is not at all reluctant to call up one of his superiors to discuss a problem.

> Even if I just want input I have absolutely no qualms about phoning up a superintendent, presenting a situation and asking for an opinion. I'm not necessarily asking what to do, I'm asking for input . . . trust, I guess, is what it is.

Terry respects the system's practice of utilizing district expertise at principal in-service sessions --not always bringing in outside experts as many other school districts do.

Community Outreach

Terry is keenly aware that the boundaries of the school and, therefore, his responsibilities do not end at the school gate. He believes that all schools, but particularly those with declining enrollment such as Erin Heights, must be very

aware of their position in the community. Principals must be out selling their programs to parents and students. "A tremendous amount of time is spent marketing the school," said Terry. The staff of Erin Heights have done everything possible to promote their school--erecting signs, establishing displays in malls, distributing brochures, and conducting numerous meetings with prospective students and their parents. "We have a very good relationship with the elementary schools in the area," he explained, which helps to promote the junior high program. He spends many hours of his week, particularly in the early fall and late spring, meeting with individual parents. He is prepared to set aside administrative tasks and spend an hour with a parent looking at the school. An unfortunate side effect of this necessary but often time consuming concern for students numbers means, according to Terry, that decisions are occasionally based on a concern for numbers. In a situation where "every child is critical to the existence of the school," Terry and his staff constantly have to attend to their reputation in the community. Problems must be dealt with efficiently before community concerns are heightened, therefore a conflict situation or other problem is sometimes not allowed to follow its natural path. This is unfortunate according to Terry.

Efforts have been successful, and the school is now in a fairly secure position with as many as eighty percent of the junior high students choosing to come to Erin Heights even though many of them are able to actually see another junior high school from their homes. Terry, however, is not yet able to completely relax and forget about numbers.

One of Terry's first projects when he became principal of the school was to establish a Parent Advisory Committee which had not been in operation for several years. He sees the group as having two functions:

> I've made it clear to them that I see their function essentially as a communication device. . . . We tell them to go out and tell people that Erin Heights is a good school, but to believe it themselves first. . . . it's amazing the number of people who have looked at our school because of contact with someone on the committee. The second thing we do is use their name for fund raising. This is a very minor role as I don't believe in raising funds. They don't run the school, although we do discuss policies with them.

The group meets regularly and anyone can attend, although Terry makes sure each class is represented by at least one parent. A chairperson is chosen by the group, and the meetings are kept fairly informal. The Parent Advisory Committee has been successful. According to Terry, " A lot of rapport has been established in the group, parents tend to start when their child first comes to the school and stay until they leave."

How does Terry react to this constant concern for students numbers and the need to promote the school?

> I'm pleased that we've been successful, but when I leave Erin Heights I want to go into a situation where there is more of a guaranteed enrollment. You tire from all of it.

Decision Making -- An Acquired Skill

Decision making is an aspect of Terry's job that he feels has improved with experience. "When I first started in administration I solved everyone's problems," he explained, "as a matter of fact I looked for problems that needed solving." He is more comfortable now setting aside a decision even when he is under pressure from others to take action. "No decision, or very few anyway, has to be made on the spur of the moment, but again knowing that comes with experience." Terry is careful to avoid making pat, evasive decisions; a practice he considers immoral. According to Terry, "Decisions should be based on people . . . good, honest, moral decisions." He is comfortable mulling over a difficult situation, even taking it home

with him if necessary. He has been known to keep a child out of class rather than make a decision to return them to one from which they had been dismissed, and sent to the office. "A child in conflict with a teacher," he explained, "will not accomplish anything in class until the situation is resolved." He is careful not to make decisions for others, although he feels pressured to do that frequently:

> I think the tendency to send problem students to the principal is very human really. Frustrations and anxiety, on the adult's part, I can fully appreciate. At the same time I know that nothing can be accomplished by me making the decisions so I try not to solve the problems. . . . I think the power should be with the teachers in the classroom.

Terry is uncomfortable with some of the expectations being placed on principals in terms of making decisions. With school boundaries being more open, the principal is often left to decide who gets in and who doesn't. Who should be making those decisions he can't say, but he often feels the weight of many decisions knowing the far reaching effects on others, particularly students.

"Decisions," Terry said, "should be based on a mission." It was on this basis that he was able to initiate a number of changes upon his arrival at Erin Heights School, including closing off the departure of grade eight students, introducing the family concept, implementing new programs, and toning down the bureaucratic rule structure by which students were previously managed. Because he has the experience and maturity not to rush a decision, he seldom regrets decisions although he admits to some "drastic mistakes" early in his administrative career. Last year a teacher had to be declared surplus, and after much soul searching a teacher whom he considered excellent was chosen. Although not happy to have had to make the decision, economic and program need dictated the situation, and he has no regrets about the path he took.

"I'm not on a power trip," stressed Terry. He does, however, admit that there are times when a certain amount of aggressiveness is necessary -- when a policy needs to be pushed or an action defended. He was pleased that one of the individuals nominating him described him as being "pleasantly assertive."

> There is a fine line between being pushy and being assertive. It is one of the things I believe children have to be taught. . . .They need to know that they have the right to certain things, the same goes for teachers, secretaries and so on.

Conflict, Communication and Compromise

Conflict is an aspect of his job that Terry expects and sometimes even encourages. Experience has helped him develop the confidence to deal with conflict and also to see some of the benefits of some degree of conflict within the school organization. He knows that some conflict situations, particularly those in which he is not directly involved, require some intervention on his part, while others simply need to be monitored and allowed to resolve naturally. Compromise is a common theme which characterizes his approach to dealing with some conflict situations.

Terry's first rule for his participation with other individuals or groups in resolving conflict is that ownership and responsibility belong to the participants, not to him. His role is to merely act as a facilitator and to "keep an even keel." He explained:

> Initially what you try to do is provide all the support that you can so the person who owns the problem gains. . . . Staying calm also has an incredible effect on everyone. . . as the administrator if you get all heated up you are adding to the volatility of the situation rather than dampening it.

The most difficult situation in dealing with conflict, according to Terry, is when people fail to open up and communicate, or when they go "underground." This was the case when Terry was dealing with a teacher experiencing considerable difficulty in the classroom. For over a year communication and cooperation were excellent and a great deal of progress was made. Suddenly something happened to shatter the teacher's trust in Terry, she refused to communicate further and progress stopped. The situation deteriorated to the point where she was asked to leave the school. Terry talked about the situation:

> That sort of conflict has a bearing on everyone. As much as you try to put it aside it is certainly something that is always there, it's always brewing. It was one of the most frustrating conflict situations that I have ever dealt with, especially when she went "underground."

Terry finds that in a school, conflict between staff members can be the most difficult to deal with as well as destructive to the work environment; undermining energies. Often teachers do not want his involvement so he must look for ways to initiate communication or confrontation between the parties involved. "So much depends on the situation," he explained, "it is difficult to describe an approach I would take."

Terry welcomes disagreement and a certain degree of conflict. "It's good for teachers to complain a bit in the staffroom about the principal," he said. He knows that when dealing with people not everyone always agrees, but he is confident in knowing that his decisions are based on the needs of the children. He accepts that he will not always agree with the teaching styles of all of the teachers on his staff. Practices such as having students stay for detentions after school, or lining up in classes do not particularly please him, but teachers are allowed to work in that mode if they are showing respect to the students.

Terry's attitude toward conflict was evident in his reaction to having had to declare one particular teacher as surplus and see her go to another school:

> It was unfortunate the way it turned out, that she had to go, she was someone who worked really hard, and was a great anti-force in a way. Her direction was a little bit contrary to everyone else which was great. . . . things are perhaps more peaceful but that is not always the way to go.

Time Management -- A Matter of Priorities

Managing his time is a concern for Terry, something he finds he must make an effort to control. His experience is that that the job of being a principal often involves a series of fragmented, disjointed activities. Seldom does he have the luxury of one hour to work on a specific task. He finds it helps to force himself to keep children the common thread in all the activities and make time decisions based on people and their needs. As he explained, "There is a tendency to think of the running of schools based on a series of tasks--it doesn't work that way."

Terry works long hours at the school and often takes work home with him, usually paperwork because he finds it most practical to leave the school hours as open to people as possible. His first priority is children but he is aware that there are thirty staff members, as well as parents who need his time as well. He explained how this situation is even more apparent at Erin Heights:

> I've been in other situations where there are different needs, perhaps the relationships are different and teachers are more reluctant to come to the office. I've been in a school where you could get two hours of uninterrupted time with no problem. The situation here, with all of the special needs kids and the type of staff we have - fairly young, vibrant and full of ideas, their needs are more immediate.

A task that may seem mundane such as locating a movie projector, may not seem critical, but to a teacher it may be very necessary for an lesson in half an hour. "I

have to be assuring that maximum learning takes place," he explained, "nothing is more important than to facilitate that role, which is something we often lose sight of."

One of the first principals with whom he worked as an assistant principal was an excellent role model in terms of time management. Aware that this was a skill he needed to develop, Terry watched and learned all he could:

> I knew that I had no problems with kids and the interpersonal aspects, but I did want to be a better manager, not to let it take over though. I needed to learn to be more efficient, and I really did learn from him.

Terry sets up a weekly schedule in which he plots his teaching, observing, class visiting, and staff conference times. These are fixed and only an emergency will change them. "My teaching time is precious to me," he explained, "I want to be successful in the classroom so you can't always have a substitute in there." All remaining time is left for the other responsibility of running a school--meeting people is the first priority. It is not unusual to have a fifteen minute meeting scheduled with a parent stretch to an hour: "You have to make up your mind about what is more important, a person or a form. You go for the person and fifteen minutes turns into an hour."

A Successful School

Terry, having recently completed a Master's program in educational administration, is aware of all of the current literature on effective schools. He is somewhat suspect of what he describes as the trend to apply established criteria in order to evaluate effectiveness. He prefers to look at the schools that are successful

to determine what is effective. "What does effective mean?" he asked, "there are a thousand different definitions but it has to be tied to student achievement."

Erin Heights is a school Terry considers to be very "successful," a term he prefers to "effective." Success must be measured in terms of student achievement and student and staff satisfaction. Citing the more established student population, low staff turnover, success with behavior disorder students, and the number of new and vibrant programs, Terry is confident claiming that Erin Heights is a good school. He believes that it is vital for both staff and students to feel successful--something he endeavors to do. It is also important, especially given the constant enrollment question, to let others know of the school is successes.

Evaluation of staff is a practice that he believes to be very important, but one that is not done enough. He himself has not been evaluated for four years, and he is only required to do staff evaluations every five years, other than for new teachers and those new to the school.

He sees one of the biggest barriers to success in schools as the heavy burden placed on schools, and particularly primary teachers. He explained:

> It is no longer something we just complain about, it is becoming alarming. When you have one teacher in a class of thirty grade one students, of which two or three are emotionally disturbed and another one has another learning problem, something has just got to give.

Values and the Human Condition

The search for a key to Terry's approach to leadership and school management revealed two things: a positive acceptance of others and a tolerance for what he calls "the human condition," as well a a strong set of basic or "core" values by which he defines his job and makes decisions. As each new topic was

introduced during the interviews for this project, Terry began to describe individuals and groups with quiet, enthusiastic commendation: "terrific teachers . . . great bunch of kids . . . enthusiastic Parent Advisory Committee." Even as he described the situation with the teacher experiencing difficulty, one that evolved over several years and obviously commanded a great deal of time and energy, Terry spoke in a gentle and respectful manner:

> She was an excellent teacher in terms of technical skills but very weak interpersonally . . . because of her mental health I was concerned that how I dealt with the problem was going to have long term effects on her as a teacher.

Terry tolerates the failings of others, including himself, accepting faults as a part of being human. He chooses, instead of emphasizing negative aspects, to highlight the positive in a practical way. When the program for students with behavior disorders began at Erin Heights, one of his first policies was to end the phone calls home. He explained his reasons:

> The first thing we did was quit the phone calls home. Those parents must have had thousands of phone call so every time the phone rang the reaction was "Oh no, it's the school, what has he done now?" So we don't phone home, that is number one. We also don't send kids home except for something extremely unusual. In the four years of the program we have had to send perhaps two kids home.

Observing that staff tend to get in a rut and perhaps too comfortable when entrenched in a school for many years -- becoming victims of satisfaction and comfort -- he encourages them to move around. He himself had to apply this practice to himself several years ago when he was assistant principal: "I fell into the routine of working nine to three when I had always been a seven to eight type."

Several values central to his philosophy become apparent as one listens to Terry discuss school leadership. Based on a Christian ethic, Terry cites the values on which Erin Heights operates: cooperation, respect and responsibility. "I can

accept a different opinion," he says, "but not if it violates the core values of the school." As an example, he does not like to see kids have to line up but it is not a problem for him if he can see and accept the underlying basis for this practice. "It does not offend me to see kids line up but it would offend me to see a teacher belittle children." He appreciates this type of acceptance from others, which is apparent as he remembers the first principal he worked for at Paul Hill School:

> We were as different as night and day. I hadn't had a hair cut for years when I first met her; I had just finished a job in construction. I looked probably the extreme opposite of what a teacher should look like. For whatever reason we just hit it off right away. By the time school started in the fall I had cleaned up my appearance a bit. I taught P.E. which she did not see the benefit of, but we were able to establish a good rapport. I think she changed a bit and I mellowed to. She gave us power and a lot of free reign and she allowed us to do things she did not always agree with because we didn't attack her value system.

The conviction of Terry's word is clear as he explains his reason for leaving Paul Hill School even though he enjoyed the school and the kids:

> There was a change in administration. It was obvious to me that the gentleman coming in and I were at opposite ends of the spectrum in terms of talking about children. I knew that it would be best if I left, so I did.

Terry demonstrates a deep respect for people -- parents, teachers and most importantly students. He has high expectations for others to work no harder than he does himself, an expectation he communicates openly to others. His calm and accepting manner appears to be ruffled by two things:

> When there is a violation of the core values you have to get excited. This is where you will get the strongest reaction from me. It doesn't matter if it is a teacher, a custodian, or a grade three kid; if they are violating a core value I get excited. Hopefully it is a calm measured reaction but that will get me going probably as quick as anything. That and apathy. I do not tolerate apathy.

. . . . .

Terry's leadership qualities appear to be as varied as those who nominated him indicate. Although a careful and efficient manager, qualities he has purposely refined, Terry remains focused on his vision for schools. School climate, high expectations and staff input on decisions are all areas with which he is concerned. Terry is well known in the district and was pleased to be described as pleasantly assertive by those nominating him.

Chapter IX

COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON THE PRINCIPALSHIP

The stories of the four principals presented in the preceding chapters provide a holistic view of each person's approach to fulfilling the responsibilities associated with a principalship. Reading the stories gives both a general impression of, and raises questions about, similarities and differences in the ways in which different individuals perform the role of principal. The purpose of this chapter is to present a comparative perspective on the four principals. Major similarities and differences appear to revolve around the contexts in which the principals work, how they relate to others, and how they define their leadership role.

The Principal and the School

Terry, Stephen, Christina and Paul and the four schools they lead bear some striking similarities and equally striking differences in personal backgrounds, job descriptions, school similarities and student populations.

All four principals have extensive backgrounds in education; they have held a variety of teaching and administrative positions. Paul, Christina, and Stephen had all been principals previously, while Erin Heights is the first principal designation for Terry. All four have completed the requirements for a Master of Education degree; Paul holds a Ph.D. Christina, Terry and Stephen are in their early to mid-forties while Paul is probably in his mid-fifties. All are married with children; Christina's and Paul's children are older than Terry's and Stephen's school-age

children. Neither Terry nor Paul intended to seek careers in education. They came in "through the back door" as Paul said, or as a result of other circumstances in Terry's case. In contrast, Christina always knew what she wanted. "I'm sure I didn't want to be anything except a teacher," she explained, "it was my goal from a very early age." All explained that administration had not been an early career goal but had, in most cases, "just happened."

Paul, Christina and Terry are in schools with enrollments of 310, 350, and 260 respectively; Stephen's school has 600 students. Paul's and Terry's schools are elementary-junior high, Christina's is elementary only, and Stephen's is junior high only. Terry, Paul and Stephen all work in older schools and must contend with both the related problems and advantages. Christina's Silver Heights School is relatively new. The students attending Christina's and Stephen's schools are, for the most part, "middle class" with fairly high academic records. Paul's school is located in an inner city area, and most of the students suffer some degree of disruption and disadvantage in their lives. Academic progress generally is below the norm. The students at Erin Heights where Terry is principal, seem to represent both ends of the spectrum -- those from fairly advantaged homes and those from somewhat deprived backgrounds.

In order to maintain their student populations, and to some degree the continued existence of the school, Terry and to some extent Paul, must be concerned with attracting students. In contrast Christina and Stephen must juggle space to accommodate all of the students their schools serve. All four schools operate programs for students with special learning needs. In addition, Christina and Terry both have highly specialized programs for behavior disordered students, while Stephen's Portland Junior High provides a program for thirty-five gifted

students. While French is a program of studies offered at Terry's and Stephen's schools, Christina's Silver Heights is a French Immersion school for fifty percent of the school population.

Three of the principals draw attention to a motto or slogan which describes the school philosophy. Terry's Erin Heights is "We are Family," Christina's Silver Heights is a "Family School," and Paul's Queen Street is "Sharing, Caring, Helping," Although not as formalized as a motto, Stephen and his staff talk about Portland Junior High being the "Best Junior High Possible."

Relationships With Others

A considerable amount of the discussion with all four principals revolved around relationships with others. Again, similarities and differences were apparent as principals talked about teachers, students, peers, parents, and superordinates.

Teachers

All four principals, apparently aware that teachers are the primary educators of children in the schools, tended to focus on their relationships with teachers and their influence on children. Three of the principals -- Terry, Stephen and Christina -- chose to take on teaching responsibilities in addition to their administrative duties. Stephen sees teaching as a way for teachers to see principals "doing some of the work," while Christina is reluctant to give up her time in the classroom and "take on full-time administration." Terry, in addition to enjoying teaching, sees it as one way of "establishing credibility" with his teachers.

All four principals spoke very favorably of their teaching and support staff members. Paul spoke of the "magic" between the staff and the students, and Stephen is challenged by the "renegades" and "free spirits" at Portland. Christina and Terry both describe their staff members as being hard working and innovative. Terry, Stephen and Christina all see teacher evaluation as an important aspect of their jobs -- one that is extremely time consuming and not always done to the extent they would like. Paul, on the other hand, spoke of teacher development in terms of allowing teachers to expand their horizons by encouraging them to visit inner-city programs in other schools and cities. Christina encourages her staff to stay abreast of curriculum changes and innovations. Stephen encourages the staff to be innovative and appreciates teachers who are willing to take risks. He uses what budget and scheduling flexibility he has to reward and encourage teachers. Stephen often deliberately seeks comments and opinions on policy from the quieter teachers. Paul admits to having his favorite teachers and also admits to generally choosing teachers that are "gentle and kind" -- very different, he said, from himself.

Christina was described by an individual nominating her as "able to get rid of weak staff." All four principals talked about how they can "use the system" to encourage weak staff to leave, but they also described the satisfaction they felt after spending long hours working with teachers who were experiencing difficulty and achieving some progress. Christina and Stephen described situations that were successful, while Terry and Christina both talked about situations which resulted in teachers leaving the school.

In all four cases, principals described good teachers as those who understood, respected and were involved with students. Skill in instructional techniques and curriculum knowledge seem to be valued more by Christina than by

the others. Stephen explained why he prefers his current staff to that of his former school:

> At the other school the staff was really good but they were very academic oriented. . . . here people are willing to speak their minds. . . . the average staff member spends ninety hours per year on extra-curricular activities. Some spend considerably more.

Paul spoke of those elementary teachers who he considers to be most significant in the lives of children:

> I just like the way they are with children, they are so observant. I'm amazed at their total perspective of the classroom at all times . . . they seem to know every child and what they are doing. . . . there should be a sort of relationship established between the teacher and the students where you can sense that there is open communication and willingness to discuss, and change and to be flexible. . . . I am looking for people that are, first of all, genuinely interested in the children.

Students

All four principals spoke of students as being the basis for decision making and direction for the school. Paul outlined his goal of building trust and loyalty between students and himself and spoke of how, for his students, the school is of great importance in their lives. "It is a very complex business being in a school like this because kids don't see you as a cog, they see you as the whole wheel." Stephen expressed concern about the school climate and how it affects learning:

> For junior high kids of varying abilities and backgrounds, the climate is the number one factor in their achievement. I believe that kids spend a good portion of their life in this school, as do the teachers. It should be a place that is not drudgery. It is important that it be a good place to be.

Terry and Paul both expressed a concern and desire that student learn how to stand up for their rights and take control of their circumstances. Terry explained:

> There is a fine line between being pushy and being assertive. It is one of the things I believe children have to be taught . . . they need to know they have the right to certain things . . . .

Paul has a similar concern, that students learn:

> . . . to make decisions about their lives; not their parents . . . . we have to gain the sense of, "I'm important, I can do it." We are getting kids, elementary kids, who will say, "No!"

Student discipline is an aspect on which all four principals express a similar thought: rules are not emphasized. All of their schools have what can be described as "codes of conduct," rather than "rules for behavior." "Relationships should always be more important than rules," said Stephen, in whose school, "the incentives are much greater than the punishments." At Erin Heights, Terry emphasizes what he calls the "core values" of cooperation, respect, and trust, rather than the complicated system of rules which previously governed the school. At Queen Street School, Paul said that there are few formal rules and no records are kept of misdemeanors. Instead, students are encouraged to accept responsibility for themselves and each other. Student discipline for Christina and Stephen is a shared responsibility between teacher and principal. Terry and Paul express very different views. Paul willingly takes responsibility from teachers and handles most student discipline problems. "I don't want (teachers) to feel that burden," he explained, "it really is a tough job to have to hassle kids." On the other hand, Terry prefers to see discipline handled by the classroom teacher, although he is willing to advise and assist. "I know that nothing can be accomplished by me making the decisions, so I try not to solve the problems," he explained, "I think the power should be with the teachers in the classroom."

Peers

Discussion of their relationship with their peers revealed a variety of perspectives. All four principals have assistant principals; Stephen, with the larger school population, has two. Discussion seldom focused on the specifics of the relationships or shared responsibilities of the principal and assistant, however, all four frequently said "we" when discussing an administrative decision. Terry and his assistant both started at Erin Heights in the same year and together worked to establish the "Family" concept. Paul, when he knew he was leaving Queen Street School, worked to have his assistant promoted to principal. Although not a common practice within the system, he was given the principalship upon Paul's designation change.

Three very different types of relationships with other principals are experienced by the four principals. Neither Stephen nor Christina spoke extensively about other principals, although the comments made were of a generally neutral nature. The experiences of Terry and Paul are diametrically opposite. Paul spoke of being isolated from other principals; not a member of the established group. He said:

> Even with my colleagues I have real problems because they view their schools as being program oriented and end product oriented. . . . I don't feel I have a great deal in common with the other people. When I talk to them they look at me like I am from the lunatic fringe.

He was extremely surprised to be nominated as an effective principal by his peers.

Terry, on the other hand, has a close and supportive network of principals with whom he talks and interacts frequently. The eight principals who meet regularly for their "breakfast club" are unique. To Terry the benefits are obvious. As he explained: "We are simply a group of administrators that get along together, and we share our frustrations and joys."

Superordinates

Relationships with superintendents or "central office" as the group of individuals responsible for the total operations of a school district are often called, also vary among the four principals. Christina had little to say about "central office" although she feels that she has had their support, particularly when faced with the difficult staffing problem in her first year at Silver Heights. Stephen accepts relating to the central office administrators as a part of his job, attending principals' meetings as he is expected to, and carrying out district policy as directed. When he sees central decision making infringing on his responsibility for running the school, he is not afraid to express himself, in no uncertain terms He described his relationship as friendly with all but one central office administrator whose policies and philosophies differ greatly from his own.

Paul and Terry are at opposite ends of the spectrum on the issue of relationships with central administration. Terry seems to have no conflict with the decision makers in central office. He is not reluctant to discuss a problem with an associate superintendent, and he generally agrees with the direction in which the district is heading. In contrast, Paul is often in conflict with central office personnel in his district. "I really consider those people to be in a serving capacity to the school," Paul stressed, "If they screw up they are going to hear about it." He would like to see more vision and more critical thinking. He does soften his stand and admits to respecting those "in charge" for both listening and allowing a principal "like him" to be a part of the system.

Parents

On the issue of parent involvement, all four principals appear to be unified. Parents are welcome in the school, regarded as partners in the education of their children, listened to, and respected. But, they are not permitted to run the school. Erin Heights, Silver Heights and Portland all have active Parent Advisory groups. At Paul's Queen Street School, efforts are made to bring parents into the school because, as he explained, "It is very difficult for them [parents] to take on things like coming into the school." Recognizing that the parental needs are very different for his community, Paul has initiated such programs as hiring a native liaison worker to help bridge the gap between community and school. Christina sees the development of parent/school relations as an important part of her responsibilities. She frequently sends home "opinionnaires" which serve two purposes: to inform parents of school operations, and to solicit community concerns and opinions.

Leadership and Vision

As in other areas, similarities and differences are apparent in the conceptions which the principals have of their leadership roles. Paul does not see himself as a typical administrator, and he admittedly seeks positions where he has considerable control and power. Leadership to him means thinking about children, talking about schools, and speaking out on issues. He challenges his staff with new notions, hoping for dialogue and discussion rather than compliance or outright rejection. Christina describes herself as "the student advocate." She believes that every principal must be an educational leader, a practice which she carries out extensively. Stephen attempts to establish himself as the administrative focus in the school -- the leader but not necessarily the decision maker. Terry seems to be the

symbolic leader of Erin Heights school, personifying the commitment to the core values which govern the school.

Both Terry and Stephen have slogans or mottos placed strategically by their desks which remind them of a commitment they have established for themselves. Terry's reads: "Revisioning your Vision." Stephen's reads: "Model Patience, Positive, Care, Share, 50% Visible." These sayings have meaning specific to their personal philosophies. Both principals stressed that they wanted to avoid discussing their work in terms of "effective schools talk" and "textbook philosophies."

During interviews with the four principals there was limited mention of the specifics of school management. Paul said he prefers not to get bogged down in details, preferring instead to discuss philosophies and issues. Both Terry and Christina described methods they have employed and developed to get control of both their time and the "paper work" aspects of the job. Although they realize the necessities of these aspects, they nevertheless want to be available to people. Terry specifically mentioned that he reminds himself about the importance of details, especially if they have an effect on the daily operations in the classroom.

Conflict management was a topic of seemingly little concern to Stephen and Paul, while Christina and Terry were able to clearly articulate their conflict management strategies. "Listening, clarifying, interacting, planning, and following-up describes the approach Christina most often takes. Terry describes his approach as often one of compromise. Both are concerned with allowing others to solve their own problems and both mentioned that open communication is vital to success. Terry specifically talked about welcoming some degree of conflict in his school, finding it to be helpful and useful in making people think about what is

happening. Although they did not specifically say so, Stephen and Paul seem to follow a similar strategy; Paul challenges the staff with new ideas even though he knows they will occasionally be "put off." Stephen, nurtures a staff of "renegades" and "free spirits" who are likely to challenge existing practices.

Four effective principals appear to have different visions for education and for the schools which they lead. But the differences are greater on the surface; underlying all four visions are concerns for children -- their current and future needs, how to accommodate them, and how to nurture them. Paul talked of inner-city schools like Queen Street becoming the central place in a child's life, through which all services and social programs should be channeled. He seeks empowerment for children and favors schools where children, parents and teachers are challenged with a vision of a better future. Christina endorses schools where academic success and program orientations are appropriate and specific to the needs of individual children. Schools and teachers being "child centered" was a condition she mentioned often. Stephen's vision for the "best junior high possible" is one where the climate is such that both students and staff feel it is the place to be during the long hours they must spend in the school building. While not neglecting academic aspects, he stressed that the school "should be a place that is not drudgery." Terry emphasized that an administrator's vision should, in part, be specific to the needs and conditions of the particular school community. Staff members must be aware of the direction in which the principal is going and choose to stay or leave. His vision for Erin Heights is closely linked to the core values he repeatedly mentioned -- cooperation, respect and trust.

As far as a personal vision for themselves and their future in education is concerned, none of the four principals was able to articulate a clear direction. All

stated that they expected to move around, not to get into a rut; central office positions were viewed as a future, but not immediate possibility. Stephen indicated that he has occasionally contemplated leaving administration and returning to teaching full-time.

Three of the principals elaborated on some specific concerns they have regarding current trends and their implications for the future of education. Paul believes more money should be allocated to inner-city schools and that social and medical services to inner-city children, which are becoming more bureaucraticly organized, should be delivered in a less fragmented manner. Stephen is concerned about the continual erosion of the local school authority and autonomy of the individual school by both higher and external forces. Terry spoke of his concern for the extremely heavy load being placed on primary school teachers, which he believes is no longer something just to complain about because it has reached alarming proportions All four principals, however, remain enthused about their jobs and about the children and teachers for whom they are responsible.

Summary

A comparison of the four perspectives demonstrates both the idiosyncratic and parallel nature of different view on the principalship. Many of the differences may be attributed to the different school environments in which these principals work. Perhaps the four have chosen, or remain in schools, which are compatible with their personal philosophies and practices. Even though the contexts differ greatly, all four principals seem to be very comfortable with those environments. Relating to others -- teachers, students, parents, peers and superordinates -- is an important aspect of their work. Although the specific actions vary, a common

thread in these relationships is a respect for others. Similarly, while individual philosophies vary, the educational beliefs and practices of the principal seem to revolve around a concern for the children being served by the school.

Chapter X

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to present an overview of the design and outcomes of the study. A summary of the study addresses both the the research strategy and the major findings. In the second section the results are compared to selected perspectives on the principalship in the literature. Next, some tentative conclusions are proposed together with their implications for theory, research and practice. The chapter concludes with a brief section of reflections

Summary

The primary purpose of the study on which this report is based was to investigate the principalship from the perspective of the principal. More specifically, the purpose was to develop an insider's or participant's view of the world of school leadership. The principalship and those who hold the position has been a topic of considerable discussion in the literature. Although the idea that principals have a significant impact on the schools has, for the most part, been widely accepted, the characteristics, styles and behaviors of those who effectively lead schools effectively have not been adequately identified. Accordingly, this study was focused specifically on effective principals.

A review of the literature confirmed that principals do have a bearing on the success or failure of schools. In an effort to identify how this occurs, research has focused on the roles principals play, characteristics they exhibit, styles they use to

perform the job, as well as on personal life histories. This study was intended to further expand two areas of existing research: identification of characteristics of effective principals, and an understanding of specific principals and how they attempt to provide leadership. In particular, the study was guided by the following questions :

1. What are the characteristics of an effective school principal?
2. What are the philosophies and practices of selected principals who have been identified by their peers as being highly effective?

The project involved two strategies of inquiry -- quantitative and qualitative -- and two methods of data collection: questionnaire and in-depth interview. Each of the two research questions formed the basis of one aspect of inquiry and data collection. All of the principals and associate superintendents in three urban school jurisdictions were sent a questionnaire requesting a response to two questions. First, they were asked to identify what they considered to be the characteristics of an effective school principal. Second, respondents were asked to nominate principals whom they considered to be highly effective. Subsequently, four of the principals who had been repeatedly nominated by their peers were asked to participate in a series of interviews.

The characteristics suggested by those responding to the questionnaire were grouped according to emerging themes. Forty-six categories of characteristics were associated with seven themes. The themes identified highlighted two aspects of effective leadership: the ability to deal with that which is involved in doing the job of running a school, and the type of person, personally and professionally, most suited to that role. The seven themes, in order of the emphasis given to them by

respondents were: instructional leadership, human relations skills, leadership style, school management, vision, personal characteristics and communication skills.

The interviews with four principals resulted in four stories of leadership which are summarized below. Significant differences and similarities were evident, not only in their styles and characteristics, but in their orientation to the task of running a school.

Paul O'Grady leads an inner-city elementary-junior high school which has received considerable recognition over the past several years. He hopes this recognition will lead to increased financial support and strong leadership in the education of children from the inner-city. Paul is a philosophical leader who challenges his staff with his vision for schools. He has held a number of leadership positions in schools, and he enjoys facing new challenges in his job. Paul has a holistic view of education and he believes leadership should be more process oriented and less program oriented.

Christina Scott is the principal of an elementary school in a suburban area. Her school has a strong academic focus, and she sees her role as being that of an instructional leader. She became a principal early in her career; she too, has been in a number of leadership positions. High energy, the ability to handle stress, and well developed interpersonal skills characterize her style. Christina concentrated on improving the school-community relationship when she became the principal of her school. She described both her approach to conflict management and her teacher evaluation and development strategies.

Stephen King is the principal of a large junior high school in a suburban area. He believes in fostering a school climate which encourages student and staff involvement. He chose the school he is currently in because of the reputation it had

for staff and student involvement. Stephen has established himself as the leader of the school, although he involves the staff in decision making. Teacher evaluation, school autonomy, decision making, and parental involvement are topics Stephen discussed.

Terry Roberts is principal of an elementary-junior high school which is constantly facing a declining enrollment situation. This is his first principal designation, and he is very well known in his school district. Establishing a vision and core values for the school is important to him, as well as promoting a climate of trust and cohesiveness. Terry makes an effort to organize his managerial responsibilities so that he is available to people -- including students, parents and teachers. He described his philosophies on decision making, conflict management, and time management and explained that making his school a successful school, rather than an effective school, is the basis for his administrative practices.

The stories of these four principals suggest that Queen Street, Silver Heights, Portland and Erin Heights schools are more effective, enjoy a higher profile in the community, have more highly challenged and concerned teachers, receive considerable parental acclaim, and have higher achieving students because of Paul O'Grady, Christina Scott, Stephen King, and Terry Roberts. In spite of, possibly even because of, their radically different or remarkably similar views and practices, all are successful leaders of their schools.

Discussion

Different principals define the principalship in different ways. Blumberg and Greenfield (1980) noted the idiosyncratic nature of the eight principals they interviewed; idiosyncratic not only in their practices and policies but in their

orientation to school administration. "Each of the principals interviewed held a particular view of [themselves] and [their] role which served as a guide to [their] day-to-day behavior on the job" (p. 164). The same phenomenon was observed, to some degree, in this study. Some further insights into those unique or idiosyncratic orientations may be derived from comparing and contrasting the approaches to the principalship taken by the participants in the study with selected perspectives in the literature on principals and leaders.

Christina Scott

From a variety of perspectives, Christina seems to epitomize the instructional leader. She is the "clinical practitioner" or educational leader described by Sergiovanni (1984). She has professional knowledge and is able to "Diagnose educational problems, counsel teachers, provide supervision and evaluation, provide inservice, and develop curriculum" (p. 12). She possesses expert authority which appears to encourage and motivate her staff. Christina's approach reflects the facilitator role described by Miklos (1983). She makes it possible for teachers to do their jobs. Of the nine categories describing principal effectiveness identified by Percell and Cookson (1982), Christina most clearly demonstrates a commitment to academic goals, she functions as an academic leader, marshalls resources and evaluates results. In addition, she has a proactive approach to leadership and apparently limitless energy. Christina is also a good listener -- all distinctive of the characteristics identified by Blumberg and Greenfield (1980). The six behaviors outlined by Sweeney (1982), all of which relate to instructional leadership, can be attributed to Christina. However, setting instructional strategies, evaluating student progress, coordinating instructional programs and supporting teachers are the most

obvious ways she defines her role. Christina personifies the themes of instructional leadership and human relations skills identified by respondents to the questionnaire outlined in Chapter Four. She has a child centered focus and is able to work with the community, parents, students and teachers. Furthermore, she possesses a number of desirable personal characteristics identified including enthusiasm, ability to handle pressure and high energy level. She is a teacher first, an administrator second.

Stephen King

Stephen can be portrayed as the symbolic leader or "chief" described by Sergiovanni (1984). He identifies and signals to others what is important in the school by "purposing," a practice he employs effectively but not necessarily consciously. According to Sergiovanni, purposing is:

> That continuous stream of actions by an organization's formal leadership which has the effect of inducing clarity, consensus, and commitment regarding the organizations basic purpose (p. 7).

Symbolic leaders such as Stephen "Bring to the school a sense of drama in human life that permits persons to rise above the daily routine (Sergiovanni, 1984, p. 8). Stephen appears to display equally the three roles of facilitator, politician and leader as identified by Miklos (1983). He responds to the staff and their needs; he assists but does not necessarily direct. He is called upon to act as a politician and to negotiate with both higher authorities and special interest groups associated with the school. Stephen has clearly established himself as the leader of the school, although participative decision making does mark his leadership style. He exhibits communication skills, including the willingness to listen to others, and has well developed expressive abilities. His abilities for "analyzing and determining the

requirements of [his] school situation, and evaluating alternate courses of action " (p. 257) are consistent with what Blumberg and Greenfield (1980) found in the eight principals they studied. Attention to school climate, identified both in the characteristics presented in this study and by Sweeney (1982), mark a commitment Stephen has made. Supporting teachers, coordinating instructional programs and evaluating student progress are other behaviors Sweeney (1982) identifies which Stephen exhibits. He displays many of the characteristics associated with the human relations, leadership and communication themes identified by respondents to the questionnaire, particularly adopting a team concept, providing recognition, setting high expectations and demonstrating confidence.

Terry Roberts

Terry, like Stephen, is best portrayed as the symbolic leader, the "chief." Although his focus is slightly different than that of Stephen's he does, as Sergiovanni (1984) suggests, "[Work] beneath the surface of events and activities searching for deeper meaning and value . . . and communicating [his] sense of vision by words and examples" (p. 8). His value orientation is clearly apparent to others, and he allows others to either "buy in" or "opt-out" of the mission he described for his school. Terry demonstrates a balance between the roles of the facilitator and the leader defined by Miklos (1983). He ensures that everything is in place to allow teachers to teach, and leads by example, demonstrating effective teaching and motivational techniques. Although management is not how he defines his job, he has deliberately organized his time and set priorities in a way which enables him to both manage and lead. Of the fifteen categories outlined by Percell and Cookson (1982) and Sweeney (1982), Terry best exhibits high expectations,

effective consultation with others, using time well, and ensuring an orderly atmosphere. He is, according to Blumberg and Greenfield's (1980) description of effective leadership, "Skilled at analyzing and determining the requirements of the school situation, and evaluating alternate courses of action." He also demonstrates, "well developed expressive abilities" (p. 257). Of the characteristics and themes of effective leadership identified in Chapter Four, Terry most clearly demonstrates human relations skills, and personal characteristics conducive to leadership success, including integrity, confidence and enthusiasm.

Paul O'Grady

In many ways Paul's approach reflects the "High Priest," or cultural leader described by Sergiovanni (1984). He is concerned about the culture and the ideology which defines Queen Street School. He celebrates the uniqueness of the school, the students and even of himself compared to his peers. He most clearly assumes the role of politician and leader described by Miklos (1983). His negotiating powers and communication skills come into play as he mediates between his school and outside forces -- parents, social agencies and central office. As a leader he seeks to implement change and to bring about improvement by raising the collective consciousness of teachers as well as of others who serve the school. Paul represents the principal who is supportive of teachers described by Sweeney (1982); however, the other dimensions of the effective leader, representative of the instructional or educational leader, do not particularly characterize Paul. He is the principal who is, according to Blumberg and Greenfield (1980), "Desiring and eager to make [his] school over in [his] image" (210). He is also the forceful and dynamic leader, described by Percell and

Cookson (1982) who is adept at marshalling resources. Paul most clearly represents the themes of vision and human relations skills outlined in Chapter Four. Excellent communication skills help him to challenge others and enable him to articulate his vision of schools for inner-city children.

In general all four principals demonstrate beliefs, behaviors, styles or practices described in the literature as characteristics of effective school leaders. No principal reflects all characteristics, and not all factors are represented in these four principals. However, some of the characteristics may be present but would be difficult to assess or observe in a relatively short time period, or through interview techniques.

Conclusions

Based on a review of the literature on effective principals, the process of identifying characteristics of effective principals, and through entering the worlds of four effective principals, some tentative conclusions begin to emerge. The statements which follow are intended to be read more as hypotheses than as confirmed "truths" about effective principals and the nature of their work.

1. The context in which principals work has a bearing on success and effectiveness. Effective principals -- aware of their individual leadership styles, values, strengths, and weaknesses; seek -- tend to seek, or choose to stay in, schools in which they can be successful.

2. Effective principals are efficient and competent in dealing with the management aspects of their jobs. However, they tend to not recognize management as their primary role, nor do they express great satisfaction in being successful managers.

3. Effective principals are likely express faith in their teachers. Except for the occasional teacher who is incompetent or who has limited ability, effective principals trust that teachers are performing their teaching responsibilities adequately, they respect individual styles and differences in teachers, and they allow teachers considerable say in school policies. Effective principals have high expectations for teachers, and they evaluate their performance regularly.

4. The principal's role involves interacting with other people. Effective principals spend considerable time talking to others -- primarily teachers, parents and students.

5. Effective principals tend to view parents as partners in education. Parents are invited into the schools, listened to, and encouraged to express concerns and opinions. However, while parents may exercise the right to make decisions for their own children, effective principals retain control of the decisions which affect the entire student body.

6. An effective principal has a vision and a mission which are clearly linked to policy and action. Vision is clearly described, and the overt nature of missions is easily observed. Children are the focus of this mission.

7. The principalship may be an isolated position. Even effective principals may seldom interact professionally with each other, and they have limited opportunity to observe one another as principals.

8. Effective principals tend to work within a tight value system but operate within a loose structure. They are comfortable with the open-endedness and ambiguity of

school leadership, and are willing to relinquish certain responsibilities to others in the school. They define core values and outcomes, but not the specifics for attaining them.

9. Effective principals are likely to maintain a proactive rather than reactive stance. They are willing to take risks and make decisions; they are not discouraged or distracted by the unexpected.

Implications

The foregoing analysis, discussion, and conclusions based on the study of effective school principals have implications for theory, research and practice.

Implications for Theory

The results of this study have implications for the way we think about principals and the schools and children for which they are responsible. It is difficult to talk about effective principals without talking about their schools. The opposite also hold true; discussions of effective schools invariably leads to a discussions of school leadership. The context and the principal cannot be viewed separately. Defining what principals do, even more specifically how they do it effectively, is complex. Effectiveness relates to the context in which principals work. Theorizing about effective principals should, therefore, take into account variations in setting and circumstances. The idiosyncratic nature of both principals and schools places constraints on the development of general theories of principal effectiveness.

Seemingly in contrast to this perspective, there may be some personal characteristics which contribute to success in the principalship. These includes a sense of self in relation to others, the ability to see the larger view of schools and the societal context in which schools and principals exist, and personal comfort in dealing with situations over which principals have limited control. Future theorizing could give increased attention to personal characteristics of principals which might contribute to effectiveness in a variety of contexts.

Implications for Research

The strategy of using the methods of both qualitative and quantitative inquiry, was useful for gaining insights into effective leadership. Tailoring and combining research strategies for future research in the area of effective leadership is likely to contribute to a more complete understanding of effective school principals.

This study was an attempt to investigate the principalship, and those who are highly effective in that position, from the perspective of the participant. Future research on effective principals could use similar strategies to study different principals, either a larger or smaller number, including high school principals, or delimiting to principals from a particular type or size of school. Rather than investigating a participant's perspective, researchers could choose another perspective -- including that of student, parent, teacher or superordinate.

Re-interviewing the same four principals interviewed in this study, perhaps in five years time, could contribute to an understanding of the evolving nature of the principalship. Research involving a longitudinal approach could be designed to study a principal, or group of principals, over a longer period of time.

Aspects of the principalship identified in this study -- including the loneliness of the position, parent involvement, conflict management, decision making, and vision -- could also be the focus of future investigations into the principalship. It would also be useful to examine effective principals of schools with particular characteristics -- declining enrollment, inner-city, or high academic focus for examples.

It would appear that, in spite of the increasing knowledge about the principalship, considerable opportunity is available for expanding the base of knowledge in the area through further research.

Implications for Practice

The results of this study have implications for practice of those responsible for the overall leadership of school jurisdictions, those who are practicing school principals, as well as those aspiring to be principals. If context has a bearing on effectiveness, principals should be allowed considerable say regarding the school to which they are assigned. In addition, principals should be involved in the selection of staff for their particular school. School management, as a primary responsibility of principals, should be diminished, or even taken over by others, possibly assistant principals in order to provide time for other activities. Teacher evaluation must be encouraged and developed as a leadership responsibility of principals. Consideration must be made for the time required to evaluate effectively, and principals should be trained in the area.

Aspiring principals should be aware of the realities of the principalship -- the relative isolation of the position, diverse areas of responsibility, and considerable personal demands. Forewarned, they may evaluate their career

aspirations in terms of the principalship. They may also consider the extent to which their own personal characteristics -- values, strengths and weaknesses, and determine their potential for success.

Practicing principals, upon reading this report, may examine their individual visions and school missions in order to evaluate whether policy and practice are in agreement. An examination of their own relative strengths and weaknesses may also lead to some relevant personal development. Practicing principals who are concerned with the isolation and loneliness of the job may also be encouraged to develop strategies for nurturing relationships with other principals. They may also be encouraged to assess their time allotments and to determine the appropriateness their priorities.

Reflections

Spending four to five hours interviewing each of four effective principals was a unique and privileged experience. I often considered the possibility of bringing the four principals together for one final group interview. Certainly, this would have added yet another layer of data and contributed to understanding of the principalship from their perspectives From comments I received from the four principals it would appear that they too benefited from the opportunity to reflect and elaborate on their experiences and philosophies.

Many times I was struck by their seemingly opposite reaction to issues and contrasting ways of performing the duties of the principalship. In addition, frequently a topic which consumed one principal's thoughts and conversations was merely a passing matter or non-issue to another. But, it seemed just as often, I was amazed at the similarities in practices and reactions to topics which spontaneously

appeared in the conversations with all four principals. All four demonstrated an openness and willingness to share their thoughts with me. They gave their undivided attention, and in many cases their honesty was more that I had expected. They were open and candid in what they had to say. As a general statement they seemed to know themselves, were modest but self-confident, credited others with much of their success, and aware of and accepting of their own limits and mistakes.

All four principals worked in busy schools where at any given time a number of things were happening. Yet as I talked to each of them, they appeared to be in control and confidently "on top" of things. Like each of their large but organized offices, all four seemed to be "uncluttered," comfortable, and relaxed.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Questionnaire Cover Letter

27 Rosewood Drive
Sherwood Park, Alberta
T8A 0L8

December 10, 1987

Mrs. Jane Smith
Principal
Rosetown Elementary School
Edmonton, Alberta
T6L 9K6

Dear Mrs. Smith:

I am a graduate student at the University of Alberta, currently on leave from my teaching position with Edmonton Public Schools. My purpose in writing is to ask for your assistance with the initial stage of collecting data for my thesis research on effective elementary and junior high school principals.

My first task is to identify a number of principals considered to be particularly effective by colleagues, supervisors and administrators who are familiar with their work. Accordingly, I am asking administrators in several school districts to nominate effective principals. In the major stage of my study I will contact some of the nominated principals and ask them to participate in a series of interviews.

I would be very grateful if you would consider assisting me by completing and returning the enclosed nomination form. In deciding on a nomination, you may consider whatever criteria or characteristics you regard as important. However, you may wish to include factors such as the principal's success in maintaining levels of academic achievement, developing professional competence of staff, establishing relationships with the community, displaying interpersonal skills, acquiring resources and maintaining school climate.

As you will note, I am not asking nominators to identify themselves, however, I am interested in knowing what factors influenced their decision. The names of both the nominators and those being nominated will remain confidential. From among the principals nominated, I will approach five or six and ask them to participate in my study. The principals who agree to participate will remain anonymous throughout the study and nomination forms will be destroyed.

The proposal for this study has been approved by an ethics review committee of the Department of Educational Administration. My advisor is Dr. E. Miklos, Professor of Educational Administration. Please do not hesitate to telephone either him (432-4916) or myself (464-5932) if you have any questions about the study.

Please respond by returning the completed nomination form in the enclosed envelope at your earliest convenience.

Thank you very much for considering my request for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Sandra Baskett

Appendix B

Questionnaire

THE FFFECTIVE PRINCIPAL NOMINATION FORM

Please indicate below, the names of one or two people you consider to be highly **effective principals.** For the purposes of my study I am interested in those principals who are currently assigned to **elementary** or **junior high** schools. Please restrict your selections to these categories.

A. Principal #1

1. Name _____
2. Current School _____
3. Why have you selected this person? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

B. Principal #2

1. Name _____
2. Current School _____
3. Why have you selected this person? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

C. What, in your opinion, are the characteristics of an **effective school principal**?

*please enclose only the questionnaire in the return envelope

Appendix C

Letter Requesting Participation in Interviews

27 Rosewood Drive
Sherwood Park, Alberta
T8A 0L8

April 27, 1988

Mr. Robert James
Principal
Silver Street School
9221-31 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T3M 1Z2

Dear Mr. James:

As you may recall, several months ago, I conducted a survey in which I asked respondents to nominate elementary and junior high school principals whom they considered to be highly effective. I am pleased to be able to report that your name appeared a number of times in the responses from principals and area superintendents from *City Public Schools*.

The purpose of my research is to develop several case studies of principals considered by their peers and supervisors to be highly effective school administrators. My study will be guided by two general questions:

1. What factors contribute to a high degree of leadership effectiveness in schools?

2. What are the philosophies and practices of highly effective principals regarding the management of conflict?

I would be very grateful if you would consider being one of the participants in my study.

The research approach will involve conducting a series of tape recorded interviews with each principal, doing a preliminary analysis, and having the principal read the analysis to confirm or clarify the interpretation. In order to do a comprehensive study, three or four interviews are likely to be required which may entail a total of three to four hours of your time over several weeks. My time is quite flexible, and I would be pleased to schedule the interviews at times which are most convenient for you. The research will be conducted in a manner which ensures complete anonymity to the participants. In addition, participants may opt out of the study at any stage of data collection or analysis.

As I ask for your involvement, I am somewhat hesitant because I do realize that your responsibilities are highly demanding and that there are numerous constraints on your time. I am also aware that because of your excellent reputation you may have already been called upon to take part in similar studies. I hope that you will agree to participate in the study in spite of these realities; however, if upon consideration you feel that you simply don't have time available, I will understand.

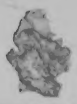
I shall telephone you later in the week to discuss the study with you and to answer any questions you may have. Until then, I shall look forward to the possibility of a favorable response to my request.

Yours truly,

Sandra Baskett

Appendix D

Cover Letter - Initial Draft of Interview Analysis



955-110A Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T6J 6N4

September 6, 1989

Mr. R. James
Principal
Silver Street School
9221-31 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T3M 1Z2

Dear Mr. James:

After setting aside my thesis for over a year (new job, new home, new baby), I am now close to completing the project in which you are an important participant. After writing the analysis of your interviews, as well as those of three of your peers, I am anxious to finalize the thesis so that your story can be told.

Enclosed you will find a second draft of an analysis of the three interviews I had with you. As I mentioned when we began, your story will stand alone as a section in my thesis. In this section there will be no attempt to relate what you have said to the current literature on effective principals, nor will I compare your characteristics, opinions and leadership style to the other principals in the study. These aspects of the thesis will be dealt with in other chapters.

Although I know this is a busy time for principals (but then when is it not busy?), I would be grateful if you could take the time to read over what is presented here and do the following:

1. Indicate areas where I have misunderstood, exaggerated, or minimized what you have said. On a separate sheet or in the margins write any changes or corrections.

2. Indicate areas where what I have said is perhaps too sensitive or controversial and which you would like left out or changed.

3. Since our interviews and upon reading my analysis is there anything you would like to add or explain further? Feel free to do so, either on the copy I have given you or on a separate page.

When you have had a chance to go over the analysis please mail it back to me in the enclosed envelope. If you would like to talk to me my phone number is 988-5093.

Thanks again for your time.

Sandy Baskett

Appendix E

Nominator's Comments

Nominator's Comments

Christina Scott

Students are said to be number one.

Staff are involved in improving programs.

Hard working.

I've seen drastic improvements in over-all school effectiveness, child-centeredness, sensitivity to parents, and improvements in staff performance.

Gets rid of weak staff!

Has a vision of the service children should receive.

She cares about people; students, staff, parents and teachers.

She organizes her school using staff talents to their maximum.

She is creative!

In my view and experience she is a very effective principal due to her focus on children and the positive.

She develops the professionals she works with and involves them in decision making.

She effectively communicates with staff and community.

She is committed to acquiring the resources needed to make staff and students effective.

Stephen King

Stephen moved into a relatively good junior high school and has proceeded to provide the necessary leadership to bring staff together, to focus their professional efforts and to increase the total sense of community.

I see him as a competent administrator who supports teachers in the instructional process.

There is a positive climate for learning in that school's environment.

Stephen impresses me with his enthusiasm, professionalism, and his ability to work with people.

I have been fortunate to observe some of the "fruits of his labour" with the staff and students from his school.

Stephen has high expectations of students and teachers.

Stephen has set school level goals and created incentives for learning.

He communicates high expectations.

Stephen allows for staff participation in decision making.

He sets realistic goals and priorities which enhance student learning and behavior.

He is very attuned to the community.

Stephen encourages and supports individual initiatives and risk taking.

Terry Roberts:

Excellent vision of education.

Excellent interpersonal relationships.

Has a concern for children.

I've heard nothing but positive comments from staff, counsellors and former students.

I believe that he has established strong school guidelines in terms of student workmanship and standards.

Participates in professional development activities

Maintains a strong school climate.

Attempts to meet the needs of all students and allows for their comfort.

This administrator demonstrates a strong commitment to his staff and the

programs in his school.

He has a strong vision which he clearly articulates.

leadership qualities

outspoken

pleasantly assertive

student oriented

well organized

goal and task orientated

excellent communication skills

well run school

Paul O'Grady:

He is dynamic, creative, and caring.

He believes in people - both staff and students.

He is a passionate educator with a great sense of humor.

He will go the extra mile.

He makes things happen.

Paul is an exceptionally creative, innovative, energetic, action-oriented, caring person.

He knows and uses the system and community resources well.

Paul is an innovative, creative, and dynamic thinker.

He has an idealistic view of education.

Paul has strong interpersonal skills and he is sensitive to the needs of others.

He is very self directed.

A thinker - always looks at what we do from the kid's perspective.

Pushes people to the limit in terms of thinking about what teaching is all about.

Approachable.

Paul has developed a very strong team spirit among his staff, and has total commitment to a school vision.

Paul has a special philosophy of education.

A model of vision and commitment.